

# **FROM DREAMS TO REALITY:**

## **A CASE STUDY OF A**

## **WOMEN'S ENTERPRISE AGENCY**

---

A thesis

submitted in fulfilment

of the requirement for the Degree

of

Master of Arts in Political Science

at the

University of Canterbury

by

**Jan Francis**

---

University of Canterbury

1996

## ABSTRACT

---

This study documents the strategies of a feminist organisation directed at enhancing women's access to flexible well paid work in occupations in which women have been under- represented. Founded on the initiative of women working in government departments and local bodies, 'Femco' utilised a variety of state initiatives which provided resources to organisations running training courses, generating employment for 'disadvantaged' groups and enhancing individuals' access to self-employment.

While it strategically responded to successive employment schemes developed by both Labour and National governments, Femco sought to operate in the private sector through setting up a women's labour pool which competed with other businesses for contracts. Femco provided work opportunities in the areas of painting, gardening and lawn mowing for women who were unemployed and/or beneficiaries, interested in part-time and casual work.

The study documents the interaction between 'Femco' as a women's community business initiative and state policy with respect to the economy and employment generation. It explores contradictions in state policy and tensions in the operation of this feminist organisation which set out to provide women with work in male dominated trades, but found itself operating a team of women cleaners and business advisory service. The difficulties of sustaining commitment to flat rates of pay, non hierarchical organisation and support for women seeking flexible employment while competing for contracts with other businesses are analysed. Through this case study of a single organisation the relationships between national policy initiatives and local community strategies are explored. This study also provides an opportunity to analyse the complexities of practical politics and the interaction between political vision and the active strategising of a group of feminists interested in changing women's position in employment.

## DEDICATION

---

*To my partner Mo Pettit without whose support, encouragement, love and wonderful meals this thesis would not have been completed.*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

---

Many people make a project such as this possible and I would like to particularly acknowledge my supervisors Rosemary Du Plessis, Joanna Goven and Christine Dann for their wonderful support, guidance and tolerance: the women of Femco who agreed to be interviewed, without whom the material presented in the thesis would have lacked vibrancy, colour and perspective: the Board of Femco who allowed the use of documents and the staff who facilitated access and traced a variety of sources. A very special thanks to Jane McKenzie who formatted and checked presentation and without whose calming influence and superb advice the final product would not have happened, and finally my partner Mo who helped with proof reading, kept me going into the night and who never stopped believing in me.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

Abstract	i
Dedication / Acknowledgements	ii
Contents	iii - v
 <b>Chapter One    INTRODUCING FEMCO</b>	 <b>1</b>
1. Femco: A Feminist Employment Initiative	2
2. Femco: A Brief History	6
3. Women's Economic Independence	7
4. Working From A Feminist Perspective	9
5. Feminist Business: The Labour Pool	12
6. A New Initiative: The Business Advisory Service	15
7. The Challenges of Voluntary Organisations	16
8. Femco: Economic, Political and Social Context	18
 <b>Chapter Two                RESEARCH STRATEGIES</b>	 <b>23</b>
1. Introduction	23
2. Femco As A Case Study	24
3. Interviews: Selection and Analysis	25
4. Focus Group Interview	30
5. Insider Status: Possibilities and Problems.	31
 <b>Chapter Three            IT'S NO JOB FOR A LADY:                                       WOMEN AND NON-TRADITIONAL WORK</b>	 <b>36</b>
1. Introduction	36
2. The Policy Environment	37
3. Gendered Jobs And Gendered Labour Markets	40



4. Gendered Jobs: Femco's Responses	42
5. Femco and Workers Co-operatives	47
6. Femco and State Policy	48
7. Femco and the Operation of the Labour Pool	52
7.1 Accessing Resources	52
7.2 Providing the Work	53
7.3 The Working Environment	55
7.4 Skill	59
7.5 Femco and Expansion	63
7.6 Employment Legislation	66
8. Conclusion	70

<b>Chapter Four</b>	<b>THE ENTERPRISE CONNECTION: WOMEN'S</b>	
	<b>ENTERPRISE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</b>	<b>74</b>
1. Introduction		74
2. An Entrepreneurial Economy		74
2.1 Women Business Owners		77
2.2 Femco and the Informal Economy		78
3. Policy Environment		79
4. Community Enterprise Development		81
5. Femco and Women in Small Business		82
6. Enterprise Assistance		86
7. Femco, Maori Women and Business		87
7.1 Specific Women's Programmes		89
8. Femco and Business Development		90
8.1 The Labour Pool		93
8.2 The Business Advisory Service		97
9. Femco and Restructuring		100
10. Conclusion		101

<b>Chapter Five</b>	<b>FROM DREAMS TO REALITY: THE ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXT</b>	<b>104</b>
1. Introduction		<b>104</b>
2. Feminist Organisations		<b>106</b>
2.1 Femco's Origins		<b>109</b>
3. Femco and the Ministry of Women's Affairs		<b>116</b>
4. Femco: Internal Function		<b>118</b>
4.1 Board and Staff Relationships		<b>118</b>
4.2 Financial Decisions		<b>125</b>
4.3 Board and Management: Roles and Functions		<b>130</b>
4.4 Expansion of Femco: Skill, Requirement and Decision making		<b>132</b>
4.5 Femco: Philosophy and Practice		<b>139</b>
4.6 Financial Risk		<b>141</b>
5. Conclusion		<b>143</b>
 <b>Chapter Six</b>	 <b>CONCLUSION</b>	 <b>145</b>
 <b>Bibliography</b>		 <b>154</b>
 <b>Appendices</b>		 <b>175</b>

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCING FEMCO

*In the beginning . . .*

*Once there was a group of women who lived in a city which was experiencing a sudden and distressing rise in unemployment. The women worked with unemployed people who were struggling to survive on government benefits and who were depressed by their inability to find paid work. The women were part of a network of people working on employment issues. These people were attempting to generate jobs and income for those displaced by a rapid change in the nation's economic direction. The network was dominated by men and many of the solutions they advocated were aimed at the men who were reacting most visibly and violently to their unemployment.*

*The women became frustrated with the lack of recognition of the issues and problems faced by unemployed women, so they set up their own organisation. The organisation was to assist women's access to paid work, at good pay, and suitable hours, within sectors dominated by men. The women had a dream of a community business which would provide women currently on benefits with an independent income and employment in a supportive environment. The organisation would be run by women for women, would be caring and understanding and would make a profit. The women set about making their dream a reality and set up a labour pool which provided work for many unemployed women. The organisation grew and developed, employed more staff and attracted professional women to the board of management. The organisation survived changes in government policy, diversified its services and fulfilled government contracts. However, all was not well in the organisation. Staff had not all performed their duties well, some wanted to move away from providing flexible employment for unemployed women, some wanted the organisation to provide jobs for women in more traditionally 'female' occupations', some wanted a more professional image, some wanted to employ men. The original vision of the organisation was beginning to fade, the founding members had moved on and in its seventh year of operation the organisation faced a severe financial crisis. This crisis forced the organisation to address the issue of its survival, its vision and its future.*

## 1. FEMCO: A FEMINIST EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVE

This thesis examines a feminist enterprise agency. Femco<sup>1</sup> began in 1986 as a Christchurch feminist employment initiative directed at increasing women's access to paid employment generally and to male dominated, semi-skilled, manual work in particular. The study explores ways in which feminist organisational principles generate problems as well as possibilities. The possibilities centre around new ways of organising paid work, valuing women's labour and challenging some of the assumptions regarding women's place in the labour market. The problems centre around the struggle to remain committed to the initial goals of Femco while increasingly using strategies associated with standard business practice to compete in the private sector and to access government funding. The study demonstrates the ways in which a change oriented organisation takes advantage of forms of state policy to effect radical innovation, but also how it is shaped by those policies. It raises questions such as: How did a feminist organisation committed to facilitating women's access to non-traditional work end up running a team of women cleaners? Why did an organisation providing business advisory services ignore business principles in its own management? Why did an organisation committed to collective decision-making delegate decision-making to a manager? This study seeks to answer these questions through the detailed analysis of the internal functioning of the organisation and an exploration of the impact of external factors beyond its control.

In addition, the study explores the impact of 'business' oriented policies on social service organisations. Such policies have been followed by successive New Zealand governments from 1984-94. Femco took advantage of the Fourth Labour Government's strategies directed at improving women's positions in paid work and accessed government funds to set up a women's labour pool. However, economic restructuring pursued by the same government produced redundancies and rising unemployment as individual firms faced greater international competition.<sup>2</sup> As the labour market contracted this meant reduced access to paid

---

<sup>1</sup> Femco is a fictitious name for the actual organisation on which this study is based.

<sup>2</sup> The number of people registered as unemployed rose from 19,800 in March 1978 to a peak of 79,800 in January 1984, before falling back to 47,410 in May 1985. After that unemployment rose rapidly, to over 150,000 in 1990, and to 229,390 in December 1992. By the end of April 1994 registered unemployment had fallen to 186,450, still more than double the number of unemployed in 1984 when the Fourth Labour Government came to power. (*Employment The Issues: Prime Ministerial Task Force on Employment, 1994: 9*).

employment, for many women. Women's access to paid employment is influenced by a number of factors, but any improvement in their participation requires an expanding labour market and economic growth which is creating new jobs. The New Zealand economy since 1984 has been characterised by high unemployment and gradually improving economic growth (*Employment The Issues: Prime Ministerial Task Force on Employment, 1994*). This increased competition was felt by Femco in its commercial activities of painting and gardening, and eventually resulted in lower wage rates and fewer women being employed by the organisation. The number of hours Femco offered to workers increased as demand grew, but to compete effectively Femco increasingly employed qualified, skilled women in full-time work. The provision of part-time, casual work, an original goal of the organisation, decreased and Femco restructured to provide services for other groups of women.

The thesis focusses particularly on the relationship between the public and voluntary sectors in New Zealand, through attention to women's enterprise development and the experience of a particular feminist organisation. It specifically asks:

1. How did this feminist organisation become the provider of services previously undertaken by the State?
2. How was this organisation affected by the funder/provider split, which saw the rise of independent business units within government bodies and the contracting out of previously state provided services?
3. How did the shifts and trends in government employment policies impact on the decision-making processes of this voluntary organisation and its ability to function effectively?
4. Is it possible for voluntary organisations like Femco to generate income from business activities which can then be deployed to support the provision of services to specific sets of clients?

The analysis of Femco is pursued through the discussion of key themes - issues associated with non-traditional work for women, the challenge of enterprise development and shifts and changes in organisational form. A focus on these key themes facilitated discussion of the impact on this organisation of aspects of government policy and the changing economic and social environment.

This analysis of Femco is produced by an 'insider'. I have been involved with Femco since its inception. At its formation in 1986, I was a member of the umbrella organisation within which it was established. As a consequence of changes in my own employment situation, I resigned from the umbrella organisation in 1989. In 1990 Femco became a Trust in its own right and I became an Advisory Board member and signatory to the original Trust document. My association with Femco arose out of my professional work. I have continued as an Advisory Board member and I am still involved in Femco in that capacity. This involvement has had a considerable impact on the development of this research. As a Board member, I have had access to material that would not have been readily available, but for my position within Femco. I have, as a consequence of my position within the organisation also been able to discuss many sensitive issues with those currently and previously active in the organisation. My access to the organisation as a researcher was negotiated with the current Board who gave written consent to their involvement in this research. Access was then negotiated with a range of other individuals involved in Femco at all levels of the organisation (See Appendix C). Through the interviews I gained access to a range of perceptions of the organisation.

Research for this thesis facilitated my critical analysis of my own position within this organisation over the last eight years. I have used the knowledge gained from interviews and my access to minutes, reports and other documents about the organisation to understand and evaluate the way Femco has dealt with tensions, disappointments and successes over the last eight years. My position within Femco has undoubtedly had an impact on the way I have analysed material available on this organisation. It has also had an effect on the amount of critical appraisal, both positive and negative, offered by other members of the organisation in interviews and group discussions. A more detailed discussion of my position and issues for this project arising out of my close association with Femco is contained in Chapter 2. I offer a positioned and partial analysis of issues confronted by this organisation, but also an analysis which draws on the perceptions of others who have occupied different positions in Femco. While an insider within this organisation, I seek to develop a critical position on its operation. My interest is in providing an understanding of shifts and changes in its functioning through attention to the political context in which it operated and shifts and changes in labour markets to which it responded.

The information available on Femco's operation of the labour pool challenges current government policy with respect to funding for service agencies. This policy assumes that income-generating initiatives and operating as a business will enable voluntary social service agencies to decrease their dependency on government funding.<sup>3</sup> Whilst it is possible to generate some income from providing competitive services in the private sector, the experience of Femco suggests that attempting to work within the commercial sector with under-skilled people and those requiring considerable training poses significant problems. Femco's experience was that commercial competitors paying more experienced workers lower rates had a considerable advantage over its organisation which was employing those returning to the workforce, many of whom needed help with self-esteem and skill development. Nevertheless organisations such as Femco, have become increasingly important in the delivery of services once performed by the State. While the state once provided a large variety of assistance to unemployed people, now organisations such as Femco are being invited to tender for aspects of this assistance.<sup>4</sup> However, adequate funding for the delivery of such assistance is a concern for many community organisations.<sup>5</sup>

There have always been limits to the ability of the private sector to provide employment for individuals or groups who require significant training and/or have little experience of paid work, and this ability has been further curtailed by the increased forms of international competitiveness encouraged by successive governments since 1984 (See Chapter 3 pp 52-53). While small businesses and voluntary organisations have increasingly provided employment for those with a marginal position in the labour market, this has proven very difficult even in the context of the availability of wage subsidies. (Haines, 1991; Ministry of Women's Affairs, 1991).

---

<sup>3</sup> Many government funding programmes fund only a portion of the total costs of services, e.g. the Be Your Own Boss programme, Community Employment Group project funds and some contracts through the Community Funding Agency of the Department of Social Welfare.

<sup>4</sup> For example, New Zealand Employment Service has asked for registration of interest in running programmes for unemployed people, once run in-house (*The Press*, 4 April, 1996).

<sup>5</sup> The Community Employment Initiatives Group in Christchurch repeatedly reports referrals from government agencies which no longer have the resources or the mandate to deal with the needs of some unemployed people but little or no funding is provided to the community groups now dealing with these people (Community Employment Initiatives Group minutes, November, 1995-February, 1996).

Despite the growing numbers of self-employed people in New Zealand in the last decade and the plethora of voluntary organisations, unemployment remains high with long term unemployed people making up an increasing portion of those out of work.<sup>6</sup> This case study of a particular employment focussed organisation provides an analysis of the inter-relatedness of the public and private sectors with respect to issues of unemployment and employment generation.

## 2. FEMCO: A BRIEF HISTORY

Femco was established in Christchurch in 1986, under the umbrella of a women's employment trust. A working party consisting of women in paid positions in central and local government and community organisations was set up to investigate the possibility of providing part-time, casual, flexible work for women wishing to re-enter the labour market, particularly in the semi-skilled trades areas dominated by men. The organisation employed a part-time community worker in its first year to undertake needs assessment work on women's employment. In 1989 Femco undertook its first painting contract and by 1990 had become constituted as a Charitable Trust, and ceased its formal association with the original umbrella organisation. Over this period Femco provided work for women in lawn mowing, painting, carpentry, home maintenance, home help and cleaning. The organisation also ran short workshops on a variety of topics including trailer backing, lawn mower maintenance, heavy trade licence, business feasibility, cash flow budgeting and sources of finance for small business. Femco continued to provide work for women through the labour pool and began running business skills courses in 1991. In 1992, the organisation gained a major Christchurch City Council lawn mowing contract.

As Femco entered more commercial activities the Board felt the need for a more professional approach and employed managers to run the organisation. There was also a need for higher quality service in the labour pool work and so Femco began to employ qualified supervisors and more skilled workers. Femco had initially employed large numbers of women with few formal skills for a small number of hours each month. In 1992 and 1993 it increasingly

---

<sup>6</sup> In 1988, 31.4% of job seekers had been registered as unemployed for more than six months. Only 2.7% had been out of work for more than two years. By March 1994, 50.7% of people on the register were long-term unemployed and 19.5% had been on the register continuously for at least two years. (*Employment The Issues Prime Ministerial Task Force on Employment*, 1994: 19).



employed more qualified and highly skilled workers for longer hours. Fewer women were employed and Femco reduced its service to the original client group of unemployed women, beneficiaries and women returning to the workforce. Tensions associated with working in a commercial arena with women who were disadvantaged in the labour market, and the diversification of services, resulted in a severe financial crisis in 1994. This crisis forced Femco to restructure and re-evaluate its activities. It was at this point that this study of Femco began. The challenge the organisation was confronting in 1995, ensured that many who were involved in the organisation were very reflective about the past and the possibilities for new directions in the future.

### **3. WOMEN'S ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE**

In the 1970's, women in western industrialised societies began organising around a number of issues. Women's economic independence was and is a significant feminist goal. The root of women's oppression is often categorised as being their lack of equal access to economic self determination, coupled with her role as principal care-giver in the family (Hartmann, 1981; Bruegel, 1982 1986; Mies, 1986; Beechey, 1987; Walby, 1988; Cockburn, 1991; Adkins, 1995). Femco was set up to foster women's economic independence through improving women's access to paid work. It acknowledged that women's employment needs are often different from men's, and attempted to allow many women's family responsibilities to receive equal attention to their commitment to work. The study of this organisation therefore provides an opportunity to analyse how a particular group of women addressed the issues of women's inequality in the workforce and their roles and responsibilities for unpaid work. It also provides an excellent opportunity to explore the implementation of feminist organisational principles and practices.

The group of women who established Femco were influenced by their contact with feminist politics in the 1970's and brought a radical feminist approach to their analysis of employment issues and their work. Cockburn (1991) has argued that the separation of liberal, social and radical feminist analysis and strategies is not clear cut. While these women may have identified as radical feminists they used aspects of liberal, radical and socialist 'feminisms' in their development of Femco. Some of the women were of working-class origin and had strong links with the Trade Union movement and so drew on alliances within that sector to develop

strategies which would ensure that the organisation met the needs of women who were particularly marginal in the paid work force. Others were informed by their involvement with the middle-class liberal feminist movement of the 1970's and were interested in issues of equity and inclusiveness. Lesbian feminists in the founding group were particularly concerned with the issue of sexuality and the structure of patriarchy which they defined as a continuing system of male supremacy. The need for a separate women's organisation to allow women's experiences to be validated was seen as the most effective way to improve women's access to work and economic independence.

The founders of Femco initially had two objectives: to support each other as women working in similar positions in their paid work and to provide an alternative employment option for their client group of women, who wanted flexible paid work which recognised family responsibilities and was in fields which were traditionally male dominated. The women worked in the 'unemployment industry'. The term 'unemployment industry' is used here to describe the jobs and agencies which grew out of the need to administer the government employment projects and programmes which were set up in the context of rising unemployment. These jobs were created in government departments, local authorities, social service agencies and voluntary organisations. In the community employment sector, men occupied the most powerful and prestigious positions. This is possibly a reflection of the position of women in the economy in general and the labour market in particular. In official terms, women's needs and realities are often neglected (Waring, 1988) and invisible (Shipley, 1982; Employment Taskforce, 1994). The founders of Femco sought to challenge this domination of male field-workers. Femco was established to access state resources for projects directed at unemployed women.<sup>7</sup> This was done against the background of a focus on initiatives in response to male unemployment. The founders of this organisation knew that many women who wanted jobs were not represented in unemployment statistics. A variety of commentaries and statistics on joblessness have highlighted the invisibility of women's unemployment and under-employment and the impact of gender differentiation in the labour market (Shipley, 1982; N.A.C.E.W., 1990: 54-56; Statistics New Zealand, 1993: 99-100).

---

<sup>7</sup> The definition of unemployed was broader than the official measure in that it included all women wanting to enter some form of paid employment, rather than just those who were actively seeking paid work.

#### 4. WORKING FROM A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE

The Femco Trust deed states:

*Femco works from a feminist perspective to assist unemployed women wanting to re-enter the workforce and other women for whom casual, flexible work is preferable at this time in their lives* (Objects and Powers, 1989).

The founders of Femco considered that 'working from a feminist perspective' meant the empowerment of women and their economic independence. Founding members said in interviews completed in 1995, that the goal was to construct an organisation which would empower those working within it through shared decision-making and the valuing of everyone's contribution. Founders considered that a feminist approach to organisation implies trust and a 'commitment to listening to one another's views' and talking solutions through, a collective responsibility and non-hierarchical structures.

The commitment 'to work from a feminist perspective' has at times been in tension with the organisation's commercial objectives and threatened its funding base. An early principle of Femco, for example, was to value everyone's contribution equally, and so initially all workers, regardless of skill, were paid the same hourly rate. This reduced Femco's competitiveness in lawn mowing, gardening and painting since competing contractors had remuneration packages based on productivity and skill and were able to offer lower tenders.

Conversely, differing interpretations of feminist principles have been invoked to accommodate the requirements of both the government funding agencies and the competition from the commercial sector.

The founding members of Femco were primarily lesbian feminists with backgrounds in community work. Their vision of using feminist organisational principles to increase women's access to employment was often informed by their community development training and their experience of political activism. These women were involved in a wide variety of political organisations which in various ways sought to address both class and gender

inequalities. The community development principles which were utilised by Femco's founders have been articulated in this way :

*The concept of community development encompasses social and cultural development as well as economic development. Its emphasis is on collective well-being and self-reliance rather than individual gain. To be effective, community development requires input from the most successful in society and the empowering of the most disadvantaged so that benefits are reflected throughout the particular community. Ernesto Sirolli, known for his work in assisting with re-vitalising the town of Esperance in Western Australia, has described development as - the opportunity for all citizens to reach their potential (Boswell et al, 1994: 7).*

Funding agencies were wary of providing resources for an organisation run primarily by lesbian feminists, oriented to empowering women and providing services exclusively for women needing paid work. A founding member recalled that when they applied for funding from the Labour Department at an early stage of the organisation's development they were asked:

*'Where were these disadvantaged women? Show us them.' And also because lots of us were lesbian - it was seen that we were setting something up for lesbians and that wasn't it at all. I know that the first time we put in a funding application (from a nation wide programme) there were incredible hassles with it and we know the issue was that we were lesbian. We know that because we knew the person in Wellington at the meeting.*

(Founding Member)

The difficulties which faced Femco in its attempts to provide women with flexibility in employment and economic independence, *and* to work in areas traditionally associated with 'men's work', both skilled and unskilled, underpin much of this case study.<sup>8</sup> Flexibility meant providing women with paid work while acknowledging their responsibilities for care-giving. It meant provision of work at times which suited women and which was adequately remunerated. The difficulties of realising this in practice are discussed in Chapter 3.

---

<sup>8</sup> Throughout this study, women's work in areas in which men have been the majority of those employed is termed non-traditional.

A major influence on the direction of Femco was the visit to Christchurch in 1989 of Scottish community enterprise consultant, Vivienne Hyndman, who saw Femco as providing a good base from which to develop the concept of 'community businesses' (Femco funding proposal, 1989). The community business model as articulated by Vivienne Hyndman, has as its major aim the goal of benefit to the community and accountability to that community. Most community businesses are set up as a response to high unemployment where the economic base of a community has been undermined. The model provides for an umbrella organisation, often with charitable status, which establishes trading arms. The trading arms employ members and distribute profits or benefits to other parts of the organisation to fulfil social obligations.<sup>9</sup> Government employment policies encouraged the development of community businesses, particularly in rural areas which were experiencing high unemployment (Boswell et al, 1994). Femco began to define itself as a community business directed at providing employment for women and accountable to unemployed and/or under-employed women. As Femco moved into service delivery in 1990 in the context of a very competitive environment, and some of the original Board members resigned, the emphasis on community development principles diminished. This had a significant impact on the orientation of the organisation and its client base.

## **5. FEMINIST BUSINESS: THE LABOUR POOL**

The organisation's commitment to the principles of community development meant that Femco's founders engaged in a considerable amount of consultation with unemployed women, other beneficiaries and agencies working with this client group. The first projects reflected the needs of some of these women and Femco developed a resource centre and provided workshops on a variety of topics including marketing, co-operatives, and re-entering the workforce. The workshops were well attended with an average of 20 to 30 women participating in each workshop. Approximately 40 women attended a meeting held at the Employment Resource Centre in October 1988 to discuss women's employment issues, and the establishment of a labour pool. Women who attended this meeting argued for flexible work, skills clarification, career advice and confidence building. The first co-ordinator of Femco provided workshops on these topics and continued the consultation process, particularly with

---

<sup>9</sup> Donovan [1993] provides a description of community enterprise and a variety of different applications of the model.

community groups based in the less affluent suburbs. In January 1989, three years after its inception Femco began providing flexible work in the form of a casual labour pool providing work in painting and gardening.

The original trading arm of Femco was the operation of a labour pool to provide primarily part-time, flexible paid work for women in occupations traditionally dominated by men such as painting, gardening and lawn-mowing. As Femco developed from a casual labour pool to a contracting business it began to operate in ways which challenged the goals and vision defined by its founders. When negotiating with more conservative women's groups whose support was needed to broaden service delivery and attract greater public funding, the organisation focused on the way it provided services 'for women' and did not emphasise its feminist vision. The presentation of a submission to a planning hearing required that Board members assumed styles of dress and behaviour which belied their radical politics. Nevertheless, all the women involved with Femco who were interviewed for this study said they saw Femco as a 'feminist organisation'. They defined 'feminist' as 'working with and for women', 'changing the situation of women', 'the empowerment of women', being 'pro-women', 'helping women' and the recognition of women as 'oppressed'. Some women interviewed saw Femco as a 'feminist business', while others felt the organisation was simply attempting to run in a 'business-like' fashion. Literature on voluntary organisations suggests it is almost impossible for organisations which are dependent on government funding to act as businesses in the commercial sense of the word (Butler and Wilson, 1990; Handy, 1988; Young, 1985). The issues of securing government funding and acting 'like a business' and the difficulties this posed for Femco are discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

Femco responded to the needs of those women who had initially declared their interest in its objectives. These were primarily women in touch with community organisations or educational institutes who were seeking to re-enter the workforce and young women seeking work as labourers or in the skilled trades, such as building, painting and gardening. Femco responded to the political and economic environment in which it operated. This was a time of major change in New Zealand. It has been described as:

*... a crucial turning point in the style, character and content of the politics of the post-war era. In virtually every field of public policy long standing assumptions have been*

*questioned, vested interests challenged, and existing approaches and solutions re-evaluated and often abandoned* (Boston and Holland 1987: 1).

It was also a time when the aspirations of many women had been raised by the establishment of the Ministry of Women's Affairs and affirmative action programmes initiated by the Department of Labour and by local polytechnics. These programmes often focused on broadening women's job choices and encouraged women to seek training and work in non-traditional areas. Femco sought to meet the needs of women who had participated in women's trade courses at the Christchurch Polytechnic, but who could not get work in the fields for which they had been trained. Femco took advantage of government funding available for such initiatives, such as wage subsidy programmes, Internal Affairs Work Development Scheme, and the Regional Employment and Access Council's discretionary fund for employment projects.

As the organisation became known, the demand for its services grew. In July 1989, 26 women were registered with Femco. This had risen to 95 by June 1990. Since 1992 the numbers registered in any one month have remained fairly constant, averaging about 100. Only a small proportion of these women would work for the organisation in that month. The number of hours of paid work available to women in the labour pool also increased rapidly particularly in the first two years. Femco provided an average of 45 hours work per month, in 1989 and 145 hours in 1990. By 1992 this had risen to 500 per month and by 1994, to 1,000. In 1990, an average of 24 women per month had had some work with the labour pool, but by 1994, although the number of hours worked had increased dramatically, the average number of women obtaining work with the labour pool was still only 25. Femco not only provided increasing numbers of hours of work for those working on Femco contracts, it also provided a significant amount of work for those involved in administration and supervision. In 1994, the organisation provided approximately 300 hours paid work per month for the administration of the labour pool and other projects. This meant that of all paid hours provided by Femco, approximately one quarter were the hours of those employed by the organisation to work as administrators and supervisors. This illustrates the difficulty Femco was experiencing finding work for the client group and maintaining the high standard required for private sector contracting work. It also highlights the relatively high ratio of administration workers to contract workers needed to ensure the jobs were done satisfactorily and that funding and new

contracts were obtained. Such requirements increased the overheads of the organisation and put considerable pressure on funds.

This expansion eventually posed a major threat to Femco's original goal to provide casual flexible work. For example, when Femco tended for and won a major lawn-mowing contract with the Christchurch City Council in 1992, it was faced with decisions regarding the employment of qualified supervisors and the provision of full-time work, as well as an increased need for quality control and capital purchases.

These decisions created major cash flow problems. These issues and the decision-making they require are similar to the demands on many small businesses in New Zealand and highlight the difficulties many of them face when trying to expand and compete in the local market (Dwyer, Rose, and Sowman, 1985; Callister, 1989; Haines, 1991). Government policies which seek to encourage self-employment and the growth of the small business sector have stopped short of providing access to venture capital, acknowledging the high risk factors in this sector. An exception is the capitalisation of the Enterprise Allowance which effectively allows the capitalisation of the unemployment benefit up to \$5,000. Some local initiatives have successfully worked in this area but all note that the key to success is the on-going monitoring and assistance to new small businesses.<sup>10</sup>

Unlike most small businesses, Femco had social and political obligations to the women it employed. These women were often unemployed and/or beneficiaries and many needed re-training and self-esteem building. In order to accommodate these objectives, Femco sought funding to provide the women workers with on-the-job training and to develop initiatives which would assist these women back into the workforce. This in turn created other problems as the funding bodies required outcomes such as the delivery of formal seminars or training sessions, one-to-one interviews and needs assessments, which did not always fit easily with the operation of a labour pool within the private sector. Femco handled these often competing demands in a variety of ways. Invariably the Board was influenced by the funding situation and by the quality of information provided by its employees for decision making at the time.

---

<sup>10</sup> See *Small Business Directory*, Canterbury Development Corporation and Canterbury Employers Chamber of Commerce, undated.



An analysis of Femco's documents and the interviews with women who were involved in Femco provides some understanding of why certain courses of action were chosen above others, and how the pressures from women's expectations and funders at any given time influenced what could be achieved. This is explained in greater detail in Chapter 5.

## **6. A NEW INITIATIVE: THE BUSINESS ADVISORY SERVICE**

The provision of a business advisory service grew out of Femco's attempts to 'act like a community business' and generate profits which could be re-distributed to other parts of the organisation. Femco was also accessing government funds which were now being directed towards self-employment initiatives. While consistent with the desire to increase women's economic independence, the business advisory service was catering for a different group of women from those working on the labour pool contracts. It targeted women with skills and/or professional qualifications and resources, while the labour pool provided casual, relatively unskilled work on a flexible basis to women re-entering paid work or seeking to combine some casual work and social welfare benefits. This contributed to the development of two factions within Femco. The business advisory service and the labour pool eventually became separate entities in 1991.

The diversification into business advisory services by Femco illustrates the tension the organisation faced when it attempted to deliver services to two very different client groups and maintain a commitment to providing employment opportunities to those most in need. One group comprised women who needed casual, flexible, relatively unskilled work and one group comprised women who were interested in generating their own employment. The two groups not only had vastly different needs with regards to the assistance they required from Femco, they often came from vastly different backgrounds and circumstances. The women wanting work within the labour pool were primarily solo parents with considerable child-care responsibilities or single women wanting to pursue an alternative lifestyle. Many of these women had few formal qualifications. Some were not confident about re-entering paid work and few had vocational skills. Those seeking an alternative lifestyle had youth and energy, but little commitment to the principles of a traditional 'work ethic'. Supervisors at Femco therefore, were required to expend enormous amounts of time and energy making sure that the organisation's obligations 'to get the job done' were fulfilled.

The women seeking help through the business advisory service were, by contrast, women who had particular practical skills and sound business ideas. Many were well educated and saw self-employment as a way back into the paid workforce which would give them more control over their lives. Most had confidence in their own ability, were highly motivated and simply required the practical business skills Femco could provide.

Encouraging women to become self-employed had been an objective from the beginning of Femco, but it had been expected that women in the labour pool would begin their own contracting businesses using skills and a client base developed during their work for Femco. However, given the skill levels, lack of confidence and the low self-esteem of many of those employed by the labour pool, it was clear that this would not be a realistic option for some time. Meanwhile, the need for a business advisory service for women was identified as a service the organisation could provide. This was, in part, a response to government policy at the time which was encouraging self-employment as an option for unemployed people,<sup>11</sup> and also to the growing numbers of women who were starting up their own businesses.<sup>12</sup> The provision of this service was to cause serious conflict within Femco when women with a business focus were employed to run the agency. The needs of the women in the labour pool became secondary to the needs of those using the business advisory service - a classic 'blue collar white collar' split. The perceptions of those women who were working within each of the sectors and the influences they brought to bear on the Board, resulted in significant decisions being made on the basis of very little information. In this respect Femco operated in ways which were similar to many voluntary organisations (Handy, 1988; Butler and Wilson, 1990).

## **7. THE CHALLENGES OF VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS**

My interest in the organisation and management of voluntary organisations influenced my choice of Femco as a case study. Issues associated with organisation and management have been a key source of conflict within a variety of voluntary organisations with which I have

---

<sup>11</sup> A variety of incentives were available to unemployed people wishing to enter self-employment from the late 1980's on (Department of Internal Affairs, 1991: 51-61).

<sup>12</sup> Between 1981 and 1991 the number of self-employed women rose by 80%, compared with an increase of 7% in the female labour force (Statistics New Zealand, 1993: 95).

worked as an official in local government. Agencies involved in the community employment sector are often involved in 'knee jerk' reactions to particular problems or decisions are made by a few vocal members, who have little knowledge of the actual working of the organisation. There are frequently tensions between boards who run these organisations and the staff employed by them. Staff are often frustrated with the level of support they receive from the decision-makers and the communication difficulties they experience in articulating 'what they actually do'. Similarly, boards of management experience frustration, and worry about their accountability for public funds and what they perceive as a lack of information on which to make decisions. Most organisations experience the blurring of management and board roles. This case study provides an opportunity to explore and analyse some of these issues within a particular context and to explore possible solutions. It also provides an insight into the survival of a feminist organisation. Femco is relatively uncommon among feminist organisations in that it has been in existence for eight years and has been primarily funded by the state for activities which ultimately challenge the role of the state and business in the delivery of social services.

Literature on voluntary organisations confirms that much of the experience of Femco is common to organisations working in the voluntary sector. These experiences invariably centre around funding constraints, managing dependency and coping with uncertainty. Others writing in this field suggest that voluntary organisations face particular difficulties in maintaining autonomy and ideology when they attempt to deliver a service, which is funded through contractual arrangements with the state (Butler and Wilson, 1990). Handy (1988) suggests that such situations require a particular type of management and management style, which recognises that in most voluntary organisations it is the vision not the rules which keep people and the organisation together. Much of the literature also points to a decline in funding over recent years which has often resulted in clashes of values between staff and Boards and caused a re-definition of the core ideology of the organisation (Young, 1985; Handy, 1988; Butler and Wilson, 1990). Handy (1988) further suggests that there is a built-in inefficiency in voluntary organisations due to inadequate budgets and the belief that everyone should do their own housekeeping. Femco certainly experienced these tensions as it attempted to compete in a market which demanded extreme efficiency.

These studies, however, take no account of gender in their discussions and so, although there are a number of similarities, there are also some fundamental differences. These differences are articulated in studies of women-centred organisations. These studies highlight the attempts to share the power and decision-making equally within the organisation (Pringle, 1992, Pringle and Henry, 1993; Mann, 1993). There has also been some documentation of the difficulties, factionalism, and disintegration of feminist organisations that has occurred since the early 1970's (Freeman, 1973; Baker, 1982). Anne Else's history of women's organisations documents a wide variety of women's organisations and many of the short commentaries included in her book illustrate the difficulties of organising, particularly the challenges faced by organisations which provide services to those other than members. Conflicts within organisations and the difficulties of maintaining a consistent philosophy are evident in these stories (Else, 1993 : 100-101, 281-283, 468-469). The experience of Femco is consistent with this literature which documents the conflicts arising primarily out of the tension between theory and practice. This tension is invariably a conflict between the desire to be inclusive, empower and use collective decision-making, and the need to provide a commercially viable service. More recently work has begun on the diversity of organisations which women have created and the issues of gender and ethnicity within such organisations (Pringle and Henry, 1993).

## **8. FEMCO: ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND SOCIAL CONTEXT**

Femco provides information on the complex situation of organisations directed at delivering services to a disadvantaged group within a rapidly changing economic and political environment. The case study explores how Femco modified its organisational structures to provide services when funding from the state for its activities was reduced.

Femco began in Christchurch in late 1986, at a time of increasing economic and social difficulties. The difficulties and the policy solutions were not, however, evenly distributed throughout the community. Some sectors of the community were more adversely affected than others, and some government policies with regard to women's employment provided rewards for some while disadvantaging others (N.A.C.E.W., 1990: 98-118; Du Plessis, 1992: 209-220; Hyman, 1994). Government policies directed at financial deregulation, free trade, reducing the role of the state and encouraging a flexible labour market had contradictory outcomes for

women (Hyman, 1994). Many women were employed in manufacturing and in clerical and administrative occupations supporting the export sector (Statistics New Zealand, 1993). These were the sectors which first experienced contraction and consequently women employed in these occupations experienced difficulty in finding and keeping jobs. Rising unemployment for women was occurring at a time when there were increasing demands for equality in the work place and a push for the broadening of occupational choice for women.<sup>13</sup> These demands were accompanied by an acknowledgement by some government officials of the barriers to women's full participation in the labour market (N.A.C.E.W., 1990: 111-117).

The increase in unemployment, however, made sustaining and extending demands for equality for women in paid work difficult. Government policies for women at this time were contradictory, creating advantages for some women and disadvantaging others (Du Plessis, 1992). Equal employment opportunity programmes for example, may have assisted middle managers in the public sector, but did little to encourage better access to paid work for beneficiaries and/or low-skilled women, particularly when jobs were being lost in traditionally female industries. The clothing and textile industries for example, had seen a decline in employment of 15.6% between 1977 and 1984 (Department of Labour, 1977-1984). This trend continued into the period covered by this study with employment in these industries continuing to fall through to 1994 (Department of Statistics, 1993; Statistics New Zealand, 1994a; 1994b).<sup>14</sup> The contradictory nature of government policy is discussed more fully in Chapters 3 and 4. Femco was founded as a response to these trends and directed at improving women's access to paid work, especially employment for women re-entering the labour market. Femco also sought to utilise forms of state support for employment-generating initiatives.

---

<sup>13</sup> The 1984 Labour government issued a policy statement on Equal Employment Opportunities and introduced the Female Apprentice Incentive for Recruitment (F.A.I.R.) programme. The Training Assistance Programme (T.A.P.) 1986 and the ACCESS training programme 1987 provided positive action courses for women and the Positive Action For Women (P.A.W.) programme saw the appointment of women's advisory officers in the Department of Labour in 1985 (Hansen, 1987: 9-11). At the same time economic policies had seen the numbers of women registered as unemployed rise from 19,539 in 1982 to 28,634 in 1988 (Department of Statistics, 1993: 84).

<sup>14</sup> The collection of statistics by the Labour Department was discontinued in 1990 and responsibility transferred to the Department of Statistics. Statistical classification changed in 1990 so accurate comparisons across sectors are difficult. However, overall the numbers of people employed in manufacturing in 1992/3 was nearly 23% lower than in 1986/7 and despite increases in 1993 still 15% lower in 1993/4 (Statistics New Zealand, 1994a).

Femco's work in human resource development, small business initiatives, and transition to paid work were all consistent with directions in the policies of the fourth Labour Government of 1984 and the National Government which replaced it in November 1990. These policies promoted the development of positive action courses for women in trades at polytechnics and the development by the Labour Department of enterprise packages for unemployed people wishing to enter self-employment.

The economic policies of the 1984 Labour government sought to increase New Zealand's international competitiveness by decreasing border protection and removing industry subsidies (Boston and Holland, 1987; Boston and Dalziel, 1992; Hyman, 1994). Policies also included measures to reduce the public debt by restructuring and reducing the size of the state (Easton and Gregory, 1987; Kelsey, 1993). These measures combined to produce large-scale redundancies and rapidly rising unemployment.<sup>15</sup> Fully funded government employment programmes, such as the Project Employment Programme (P.E.P.) which provided short-term work projects for long-term unemployed people, were proving costly as the numbers on the schemes rose with the increase in unemployment (Department of Internal Affairs, 1991). By 1986, when the costs associated with such programmes had rocketed and it became obvious that unemployment in the current recession was not a cyclical problem but structural, there was a shift to targeted assistance and enterprise development.<sup>16</sup>

The economic restructuring and the decline in the manufacturing sector saw the rise of small firms undertaking niche contracting work (Bollard, 1988; Callister, 1989; Haines, 1991; Ministry of Women's Affairs, 1991). Both Labour and National governments since 1984 have encouraged this development and sought to provide support for unemployed people wishing to undertake self-employment (Department of Internal Affairs, 1991). In line with

---

<sup>15</sup> The number of people registered as unemployed rose from 19,800 in March 1978 to a peak of 79,800 in January 1984, before falling back to 47,410 in May 1985. After that, unemployment rose rapidly to over 150,000 in 1990, and to 229,390 in December 1992. By the end of April 1994 registered unemployment had fallen to 186,450, still more than double the number of unemployed in 1984 when the Fourth Labour Government came to power. (*Employment The Issues: Prime Ministerial Task Force on Employment, 1994: 9*).

<sup>16</sup> Programmes available through New Zealand Employment Service for example, target those most disadvantaged in the labour market defined by the composition of the unemployment register. Traditionally this has been Maori and Pacific Island people, women, and those registered for longer than 26 weeks (*Employment: The Issues Prime Ministerial Task Force on Employment, 1994*).

government policy directed at reducing the size of the state and in response to growing demands from the community sector, the delivery of some programmes was contracted to community organisations (ACCESS, MACCESS 1987, L.E.E.D.S. 1988, Be Your Own Boss, 1990). ACCESS and MACCESS were fully funded training programmes for unemployed people and Maori unemployed people respectively. L.E.E.D.S. provided organisational funding for resource centres and Be Your Own Boss was a training package for self-employment (Department of Internal Affairs, 1991).<sup>17</sup> The focus of attention was on those people defined as 'disadvantaged' in the labour market in terms of participation and unemployment rates. Women were hit hard by the initial stages of the recession, had higher unemployment rates than men in the period from 1984-88 and had higher rates of joblessness than men. As a result, gender was seen as a disadvantage with regards to employment and women were targeted as a disadvantaged group in some government funded programmes (Department of Statistics 1993: 81-104). Some of these programmes were specifically designed to encourage women's participation in a greater variety of occupations and to increase the skill level of unemployed women.

The founders of Femco were concerned about the lack of programmes which specifically addressed the situation for women who wanted paid work, particularly women on low incomes and those with the major responsibility for the care of others. Within the community employment sector, resources were seen to be delivered in proportionately greater amounts to men than women. Decisions on distribution were often made with regard to disadvantage according to the justice system rather than position within society at large. Men who had spent time in prison and men who were likely to have confrontations with police were in this regard seen to be 'more disadvantaged' than unemployed women. In the early 1980's gangs were particularly targeted and a number of programmes were set up to address the issue of gang violence and offending (Group Employment Liaison Scheme, 1981; Work Development Scheme, 1981; Job Opportunities Scheme - Special Groups, 1986; Contract Work Scheme, 1986) (Department of Internal Affairs, 1991). Women were invisible in this system and few specific programmes dealt with unemployment among women. The Female Apprentice Incentive for Recruitment Scheme set up in 1984 was a notable exception.

---

<sup>17</sup> These programmes are described in more detail in Chapters 2 and 3.

The founders of Femco were interested in government resources being used to facilitate women's access to jobs. They believed that a labour pool for women would be able to access this funding. This thesis explores why the organisation was unable to accomplish this goal. This study seeks to extend analysis of feminist organisations through investigating the way women involved with Femco approached issues of power, equality, 'feminist principles' and the need to provide an efficient and competitive commercial service, while drawing on a variety of sources of state funding. In the process of exploring the operation of this organisation it provides insights into the complexities of feminist organisational development and service delivery. Like many other activist voluntary organisations, Femco encountered internal challenges and personal divisions. These issues are addressed in more detail in the following chapters.



## **CHAPTER 2**

### **RESEARCH STRATEGIES**

#### **1. INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter I outline the methodological concerns of this thesis and my choice of research design. The focus of this thesis is a case study of a women's enterprise agency, Femco, of which I am a Board member. The research was undertaken over a two year period with interviews being conducted in the first year. Close analysis of archival material from the organisation was used in conjunction with participant observation and interviews with present and former Board members, administrators, co-ordinators and a fieldworker. This chapter details the processes undertaken to deal with the research material. My close association with the organisation gave me access to a wide variety of primary sources but also raised issues regarding confidentiality, bias and power. The research dilemmas this poses are discussed in this chapter.

Although there is some quantitative material in this study I have used primarily qualitative research methods. Such methods have been described as being more useful than quantitative methods in the investigation of relationships, processes and contradictions (Cockburn, 1991). The methods, advantages and disadvantages of qualitative research have been widely debated (Smith, 1975; Runcie, 1976; Bell and Roberts, 1984; Gummesson, 1991; Bogdan and Biklen, 1992). While it is acknowledged that all methods of data collection produce advantages and disadvantages, the advantages of case study research lie in the opportunities it provides for a holistic view of a process (Gummesson, 1991). This study has also been shaped by an expanding literature on feminist research, especially the work of feminist scholars who have investigated worksites and organisations (Cockburn, 1991; Adkins, 1995). In addition to using the primary sources of Femco's minutes and interviews with past and present board members and staff, I have also accessed a number of government policy papers and reports. I have made considerable use of submissions made by community organisations to various government task forces, consultative committees and Royal Commissions. In this way I have endeavoured to ensure that Femco's feminist and community development principles have been discussed in the wider context of community economic development and the specificity of women's enterprise.

## 2. FEMCO AS A CASE STUDY

The case study method has been described as giving:

*...a unitary character to the data being studied by interrelating a variety of facts to a single case* (Theordson 1969, cited in Reinharz, 1992: 164).

This case study is based primarily on three sources of information: interviews with those involved in Femco, participant observation and analysis of a variety of written texts - minutes of Femco Board meetings, press releases, submissions and funding applications. As with most forms of case studies, the emerging themes guided the data collection (Bogdan and Bilked, 1992: 72). Aware of the potential impact on this study of my own assumptions about Femco, I have attempted to draw on the understandings of a variety of others who have been involved in this organisation and a large number of written documents. This study may have my 'thumbprints all over it' (Ribbens, 1989:590), but the analysis of how this organisation has operated is not exclusively my own. Other researchers have noted the opportunity for the manipulation of behaviour to suit whatever the researcher may have in mind (Runcie, 1976). The careful cross-checking from multiple sources is critical when undertaking case study research (Bell and Roberts, 1984).

This is a case study of an organisation explicitly directed at attempting to change the position of some women in the workforce by providing them with work in areas traditionally dominated by men. Interviews with those involved in the organisation were directed at tracing over time the extent to which this organisation maintained this focus on feminist politics. The responses of individuals to the questions posed in the interviews has been contextualised through attention to broader social and economic issues. This has required the analysis of official statistics, submissions and political commentaries to assess the impact of government economic strategy, employment generation programmes and the local economy on the functioning of the organisation.

Reinharz (1992) has argued that case studies provide feminist researchers with a body of particular knowledge which can be used to build theories and demonstrate possibilities for action for social change. Feminist research of feminist organisations has often been directed

at providing those within those organisations with information and analysis which might be useful for those working to achieve social change (Oakley, 1981; Stanley and Wise, 1983; Harding, 1987; Fonow and Cook, 1991; Reinhartz, 1992). This study of Femco is no exception. The study seeks to provide Femco with an analysis of the challenges it has faced over the last eight years. It also aims to stimulate discussion within the organisation and provide information and analysis which would facilitate Femco's attempts to improve women's access to economic independence through paid work. Information on how Femco has made decisions, on what has informed its delivery of services and the current position of women within the labour market, could increase the effectiveness of Femco. It might also provide lessons from the past with which to develop tools for the future organisation and development of Femco. The study has also been motivated by the idea that an understanding of Femco as an organisation might be useful for other individuals and organisations operating in specific legal contexts, particularly when entering into formal contractual obligations with funding bodies.

### **3. INTERVIEWS: SELECTION AND ANALYSIS**

In-depth open-ended interviews were conducted with present and former staff, Board members and a fieldworker, using a prepared set of questions (see Appendix D). I explained the purpose of the research to the women and then gave them a copy of the information sheet which further outlined the research proposal (see Appendix A). After agreeing to be interviewed, each of the women were asked to sign a consent form before the interview took place (See Appendix B).

Thirteen face-to-face interviews were eventually conducted. Altogether six Board members, six staff and one field worker were interviewed. A phone conversation was held with one worker who was employed in 1990-1991.

The interviews focused on the origins of Femco, Femco as a feminist organisation and a feminist business. There was a particular focus on the discrepancy between Femco's role in facilitating women's access to business advice and the difficulties this organisation experienced as a business. Femco's growth and development, its choices and direction, its decision-making processes, employment practices and the selection of staff and Board members were also discussed.

Each interview took between one and two hours to complete. The interviews also involved discussion about my own position in Femco. Asking similar questions of all the interviewees with regard to my involvement allowed me to check the validity of my interpretation and understanding of events in a wider context. Interview material was also compared with accounts available in minutes and reports. As a feminist researcher, I was interested in developing research strategies which empowered those participating in this research and involved the sharing of knowledge (Oakley, 1974; Stanley and Wise, 1983; Fonow and Cook, 1991; Reinharz, 1992). It was important, therefore, for me to explain to participants how the material obtained from interviews would be used and how the research might be useful to Femco as an organisation. Before agreeing to the study, one Board member in particular questioned what Femco would get out of the research and was insistent that the information should be used not just to produce a thesis but to benefit the organisation's goals and objectives. One person only agreed to be interviewed when reassured that the material would be presented to her in some way at the completion of the thesis. Another woman was initially also cautious about the use of interview material and how it might be used in the thesis. I agreed to give everyone the opportunity to comment on how I had used their words before the thesis was submitted. I also assured them of anonymity. Each participant will receive a summary of the outcome of this research. I shall also provide Femco with a copy of the full thesis.

In order to construct an adequate chronology of the development of this organisation it was important to interview wherever possible those who had been involved at different times in Femco's history. A decision was made to focus on Board members, co-ordinators, administrators and those who held management positions within the organisation. These were the women who had had most responsibility for decision-making and the day-to-day running of the organisation. To give an historical perspective, Board members who had had more than five years involvement with Femco and the longest serving co-ordinators and administrators were selected. In order to ensure different perspectives were represented, I approached both those who had strong feminist beliefs and those who had joined the organisation primarily because their skills were needed.

Having made these decisions other factors also dictated who was eventually interviewed. Time constraints and the availability of possible participants necessitated reducing the numbers of women I had initially wanted to interview. I had originally thought that it would be useful and possible to interview all past and present co-ordinators, supervisors, administrators and Board members, a total of 28 women.

Finally I interviewed thirteen women: Of the six Board members interviewed three were involved with the establishment of Femco, two had been involved since 1990 and one joined the Board in 1991. Of the six co-ordinators and administrators interviewed two were involved in the establishment of the labour pool, two were employed from 1990 -1991, one employed from 1989-1993, and one was a current staff member. A field worker who had worked with the organisation since 1989 was also interviewed. Recurring themes, perspectives and analysis of Femco, arising out of the early interviews also shaped my decision to interview fewer women than I had originally planned. I had been interested in diversity of opinion among those interviewed and whether there were differences between the views of Board members and those employed by the organisation as co-ordinators and administrators. During the same time periods, while there were differences of opinion between these two groups of women there was little difference within each respective group. This suggested that the likelihood of new material being revealed by interviewing all those involved was fairly minimal.

All interviews were taped, transcribed and edited by myself. I compared the responses of those interviewed to questions about similar time periods in the development of the organisation. Emphasis and nuance is difficult to capture on paper so several reviews of the tapes were valuable to ensure my interpretation was as accurate as possible. On completion of the thesis, these tapes will be erased.

Three women whom I approached to participate in this study declined to be interviewed or to provide any information. These were women who had been employed by Femco but who had left in acrimonious circumstances. This means that I do not have access to their accounts of the events associated with their withdrawal from the organisation. There is information on the events associated with their departure in Femco's documents and information about their involvement in Femco was discussed in interviews with other women. It is unfortunate that

these women's versions of their experiences could not be included in this study. The omission of their understandings of what happened and why, leaves open to speculation some of the reasons for particular actions and methods of decision-making. However, while the absence of their accounts of the circumstances surrounding their estrangement from Femco is problematic, there was considerable information about these issues in the organisation's documents to which I had access.

I wrote to these women when I began this research suggesting a variety of options for their participation apart from an individual interview. These options included written information from them about their involvement with the organisation, the opportunity for discussion with my supervisors or to send material to my supervisors to ensure that the thesis included accurate representation of their accounts of certain conflicts. None of the women responded to my initial request. Almost a year later I again wrote to each of them giving some indications of the conclusions I was reaching and asking again for comment. I suggested a variety of different ways in which they could comment on my version of their involvement with Femco. No replies were received. (See Appendix E for examples of letters sent).

While these women were employed by the organisation at different periods, the circumstances surrounding their appointments, work and termination of their employment was surprisingly similar. They were all employed in responsible positions, two as managers and one as a co-ordinator of a particular function within the organisation. Two had been promoted within the organisation from the position in which they were originally employed. One had been a Board member and a consultant before becoming a manager. The issues surrounding their difficulties with Femco and the Board's difficulties with them as employees, are discussed in Chapters 4 and 5. I have attempted to analyse the impact of the work and decisions of these three women on the organisation by reading the minutes of that time in detail and by asking other members of the organisation to reflect on the circumstances surrounding them ceasing to be employed by the organisation. Why these circumstances were repeated is evaluated in the context of developments in Femco. Lack of secure funding and the inability of the Board to offer job security were significant factors as was the willingness of the Board to allow the staff considerable autonomy. Standard employment disciplinary procedures were invoked in all three cases, precipitating the end of their employment. The consequences of these situations

and the lessons learned are discussed in detail in Chapter 5. Information on the vision and goals of Femco, the motivation of Board members, the passion of participants, both staff and Board members, the reasons for conflicts and why certain methods of resolution were chosen over others was also provided by the interviews. The interviews were also useful in my attempts to assess whether responding to various political and economic changes and threats involved a change in overall political philosophy. The interviews also explored whether original goals and objectives were compromised for survival and 'patch protection' as Femco became a significant contractor and stakeholder in the delivery of enterprise assistance to unemployed women. It was impossible to satisfactorily analyse these aspects of the agency from an examination of the minutes and other documents alone. What people say as well as what they do is important in the development of any organisation.

Qualitative research often entails the use of interviews as a way of exploring social relationships and contexts which are difficult to quantify. Bogden and Biklen have argued that:

*Interviews are used to gather descriptive data in the subjects' own words so that the researcher can develop insights on how subjects interpret some piece of the world* (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992: 96).

The interview process has also received a certain amount of attention from feminist theorists. Its potentially exploitative nature and bias has been keenly debated (Oakley, 1974, Reinharz, 1992). My experience with this research leads me to agree with Verta Taylor and Leila Rupp who note :

*Our interviews were really more like structured conversations, although the "experts" did most of the talking. We learned a great deal, but we also shared our thoughts* (Taylor and Rupp, in Fonow and Cook, 1991: 126).

It was impossible for me to be a totally detached 'objective' researcher. I was already known to these women, my viewpoint fairly clear. Discussions about Femco and issues raised about the organisation often continued after the formal interview and, although these conversations were not recorded, they nonetheless will have had some influence on my analysis of Femco. The interview process and the focus group discussion, had a major impact on this research. Each

of the individual interviews enabled me to critically evaluate the analysis I was developing as the basis of earlier interviews. Issues which were not clear from the written documents became the focus for discussion in many of the interviews. My own initial interpretations of events were sometimes challenged by interviews which suggested far more complex explanations. This was particularly true when discussions centred around the disciplining of staff members and of events, conflicts, tensions and difficulties within Femco.

The weaving together of a number of accounts, coupled with my own interpretation of events, and the evidence presented in the written documents, has led to the production of a more complex account of the forces and influences than was previously available to me in my position as Board member. Throughout the thesis, direct quotes from the interviews are used to clarify or expand on information in the main text. In this way the voices of the women involved in the organisation of Femco are heard more clearly. All direct quotes were first returned to participants with an indication of the context in which they would be used. Quotes were only used once participants had consented to their use. The intention was that the interviews and the focus group discussion of Chapter 5 would be useful as Femco develops strategies for the future. In this way the research is informed by a participatory model of research which seeks to combine social investigation, educational work and action (Hall, 1981).

#### **4. FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW**

A draft version of Chapter 5 'Dreams to Reality' was discussed in a focus group interview with a current Board member, a current staff member and a current field worker. Another Board member commented independently on this chapter which explores difficulties Femco encountered as it operated as a feminist voluntary organisation in a commercial arena. It also documents clashes of values between the different factions in the organisation, financial crises, and issues associated with power within Femco.

The focus group discussion enabled me to check my emphasis of some events and the influence of particular personalities. Discussion focused on a draft of Chapter 5. I posed questions to the group regarding the accuracy of the account and my positioning within the research. All participants had previously read the chapter. The interaction of the participants



gave a greater understanding of the organisational functioning of Femco and allowed for the collective recollection of events. Issues of decision-making and the influence of available government funds were discussed from the perspective of Board members, staff and the field worker. Discussion on the ways decisions were made and the relative power of various members of the organisation was also discussed. The field worker was able to provide comparisons with other groups in which she had been involved and offer opinions associated with the funding of community organisations. The focus group discussion was not taped but I took notes throughout the discussion.

Group discussion after the participants had read Chapter 5 was a useful way to challenge any taken for granted assumptions I had made and the accuracy of my presentation of past events. Discussion in the focus groups centred on whether the chapter on the organisation itself was shaped by my position as a Board member and useful criticism enabled me to minimise that possibility. This was particularly true of my own role in events. A Board member commented that my draft read as though she and other Board members were invisible in the decision-making processes and she challenged that assumption. On re-reading and comparing with minutes I conceded that this was the view presented so changes were made. She also noted the omission of loans made to Femco by a Board member and a staff member. This was not recorded in the minutes but was important for Femco so needed to be included in my account. The staff member recalled instances where what was presented to the Board by the manager contained inaccuracies as to her own position. This was also reflected in the final study. One response to this chapter was to point out that not everything is recorded in minutes and that we are often inclined to have the greatest recollection of events which were important to us or with which we were intimately involved. Following the discussion and further research of minutes and reports as well as an analysis of other participant's recollections, I modified some of the analysis of events offered in Chapter 5.

## **5. INSIDER STATUS: POSSIBILITIES AND PROBLEMS**

Studying an organisation in which one is a participant raises all sorts of research dilemmas as well as providing all sorts of privileges. Participant observation studies are undertaken across a continuum of complete observer at one end and complete involvement at the other (Bell and Roberts, 1984; Bogdan and Biklen, 1992). In any situation the ability of the researcher to produce quality work is intimately linked with the availability of data and information

(Gummesson, 1991). Access to primary sources can be a problem for much research. Negotiating access can be a difficult and time consuming process and compromises may have to be made. The participant observer must assess what is the most productive way to gain access to the necessary data. The sort of access allowed also affects the conclusions reached about the case being studied (Gummesson, 1991). When studying a worker co-operative, researcher Judy Wajcman became part of the workforce in the factory (Wajcman, 1983). In this case, I did not join the organisation to get access to information, but negotiated a research protocol with others involved with me in Femco. My involvement with Femco enabled me to have access to material not often available to other researchers.<sup>1</sup>

As a long standing member of the organisation I place myself on the extreme of complete involvement. I have been involved with Femco primarily as an Advisory Board member throughout most of its existence and have continued to be active within it while undertaking this research. The research process has been informed by the records of the organisation, minutes, submissions, articles and funding applications to which I have had access. This included my right to use the records for the purposes of this research. The importance of this access to primary sources should not be underestimated as it enabled the close examination of policy decisions by the organisation over a long period of time. It also gave me access to many documents which complemented the formal processes of meetings and allowed a cross-referencing of information held in a variety of places and in a variety of forms. Limited access to these documents could have resulted in a shallower understanding of the complexities of this organisation's functioning. Restricted access may not have revealed the extent of the inter-relatedness of public policy decisions and the delivery of social services by the voluntary sector.<sup>2</sup> However, my interpretation of these documents was to some extent influenced by my location as a Board member within this organisation.

A key issue to emerge from my reflections with those participating in the individual interviews and the focus group interviews was the power I have had in Femco as a Board member. How

---

<sup>1</sup> Deborah Mann noted the difficulty of access to primary sources in her research on feminist organisations (Mann, 1993).

<sup>2</sup> Femco minutes, correspondence and submissions document the difficulties the organisation faced when government policy decisions, such as benefit or subsidy entitlement, changed. Femco, like other voluntary organisations often continued to provide services for which they were no longer being paid, and/or acted as advocates for their clients with government agencies.

the decisions were made and who got to make the final decision within the organisation has been difficult to ascertain, but my own position has certainly been crucial at some points in Femco's history. This was made explicit in some of the interviews but was also indicated by some of the written documents. An analysis of the minutes, for example, reveals who proposed certain courses of action and what debate resulted from those proposals. This is one way to assess the relative power of the various players in a given situation. My position of relative power in this organisation will no doubt have influenced the decisions of the three women who decided not to participate in the research. It may also have had an impact on those who agreed to participate in the interviews and group discussion. While my position has inevitably shaped the account presented in this thesis, the material discussed would not have been accessible to an outsider who might have adopted a more conventionally 'objective' approach to an analysis of this case. As Ann Oakley has argued:

*..personal involvement is more than a dangerous bias - it is the condition under which people come to know each other and to admit others into their lives* (Oakley, 1981: 58).

My position within Femco demands that I include my own experience as part of this study and acknowledge the tension between objectivity and subjectivity. Feminists have been interested in research strategies which emphasise/enhance the power of those researched, which recognise connections between researcher and researched, which challenge notions of 'objectivity' and which explore the politics of knowledge production. The actual strategies used by feminist researchers may be used by non-feminists but feminists use them for feminist reasons and to pursue questions which arise out of feminist politics (Fonow and Cook, 1991; Reinharz, 1992).

The result of feminist challenges to mainstream social research has been a growing body of theory and knowledge about women's experiences of all spheres of life (Oakley, 1974; Roberts, 1981; Mies, 1983; 1991; Stanley and Wise, 1983; Fonow and Cook, 1991). Feminist research entails looking critically at gender relations and seeks to empower research participants while critically examining the position of the researcher and the use of their power as knowledge is produced. Most feminist research demands that the researcher locate herself as part of the research, not as a neutral observer, but wherever possible attempting to

create conditions which enable the objects of the research to be active and equal subjects (Fonow and Cook, 1991).

I have been employed by or in the 'unemployment industry' for the last ten years. My initial involvement was as a worker on a government-sponsored scheme within the university. This developed out of an undergraduate research interest in women's employment. This employment enabled me to re-enter the paid workforce, after some years at home raising three children. I worked initially on another government-sponsored work scheme in the voluntary sector. From there, my employment broadened into employment generation for women and men. My current position as an adviser to the Christchurch City Council has enabled me to provide resources and information to organisations involved with women's employment initiatives. These initiatives have included the delivery of programmes to young women, Maori women, Pacific Island women and women engaging in small business activity and enterprise. The definition of 'enterprise' in this context is income-generating projects which assist women to become more independent and/or raise self-esteem, value their contribution to the community and increase their self-worth. My position on a number of co-ordinating committees, forums and networks, has given me the opportunity to facilitate consultation between different groups of women, and to encourage them to participate in employment policy formation and in particular local authority programme delivery.

My interest in women's employment has also derived from my own experience of a broken career path, my own need for flexible hours, and later reliable child-care. These experiences have continued to inform both my paid work and my research and both were policy planks of Femco. My research on Femco has meant that I have become, with the permission of Board members and workers, a participant observer. My research is informed by my own experience and by feminist theory and methodological concerns. The research strategies I have used developed out of my interest in research which both informs and empowers the researched and, wherever possible, allows their participation and provides them with some tools for change.

I have been aware that my accumulation of information about Femco is a potential source of power, not just as a researcher, but as a Board member (Oakley, 1974). I have endeavoured to allow others in Femco access to this information, in a way which will inform all those currently participating in the running of the organisation and hopefully lessen any personal influence arising out of the accumulation of this material. On one occasion in the last year I

used information I had acquired to indicate at a Board meeting when and how the organisation had accumulated debts. This was particularly useful to Board members at the time, when we were struggling to make a series of economic decisions and needed some background information. Analysis of decisions made earlier can be extremely helpful in this process, but is seldom undertaken as people involved in voluntary organisations rarely have the time to undertake such analysis.

In the course of the research I have come to realise, while acknowledging my own 'feminist position,' that the notion of a 'woman's perspective' is problematic. Women within Femco have occupied different structural positions within the organisation and have a variety of influences in their lives which they bring to the organisation. They certainly do not have a single 'woman's perspective' on what is in their own or other women's interest or what is involved in achieving change 'for women'. As Judith Grant notes:

*Real women often (had) different, even contradictory, interests based on class, race or individual politics* (Grant, 1993: 32).

While I write from a particular position within this organisation, I have attempted to present differences and similarities among those involved in Femco drawing on the interviews I conducted with past and present board members and workers for Femco, and on written records and a variety of other material. At times there were discrepancies between official records, my 'perspective' as a researcher and the accounts which individual women have offered as members of Femco. I have attempted to understand these difficulties by careful reading of the organisation's documents and analysis of the social and political context within which the research takes place. This analysis has involved exploring the relevance of literature on women's employment, enterprise development, and feminist organisational practices and initiatives for an understanding of the work of this organisation over the last eight years. The documentation of the diversity of 'women's perspectives' within Femco is a major focus of this study. Femco has, however, at times resisted such diversity and this is discussed in Chapter 5 which focuses on its organisational dynamics.

## CHAPTER 3

### IT'S NO JOB FOR A LADY: WOMEN AND NON - TRADITIONAL WORK

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

A significant aspect of Femco's work was to extend women's access to work in which men predominate, especially labouring work and the skilled and semi-skilled trades. In this chapter Femco's commitment to non-traditional employment opportunities for women is discussed in the context of overt government commitment to this goal in the 1980's and against a background of a changing economic environment which produced contradictory outcomes for women. Femco's initiative which developed as a response to job segregation and women's concentration in a small range of occupations, is located within an international literature on women and work, and research findings on women in the New Zealand context in particular. This highlights the specific context in which Femco has been pursuing employment initiatives for women.

This chapter details the tensions between Femco's goals with respect to women and non-traditional work and demands arising out of the changing economic and social environment in which it was working. I focus on Femco's operation of a women's labour pool working in non-traditional areas because this was the most important activity of the organisation in its early years. I argue that this activity was in part a response to the environment in which the organisation was established and the needs of some unemployed women. However, it was also a response to the frustrations its founders experienced in their own occupations in the employment sector. They considered that the advancement of women's opportunities in paid work required the initiatives of autonomous organisations like Femco. There was also a concern that the funding which was available for employment initiatives was not being accessed by women and that a variation of the earlier Contract Work Scheme could be used for women.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> The Contract Work Scheme provided short term, fully subsidised, work for disadvantaged groups (primarily gangs). Initially the scheme was part of the Project Employment Programme (P.E.P.) scheme. It became a separate programme in 1986 and was terminated as contracts ran out by 1988/89 (Department of Internal Affairs, 1991: 48).

*We were all battling in our own organisations to extend opportunities for women. And we were hoping Femco could do it more easily, or do it for us, or make it happen. And there was the thing about utilising the funding that was around and making sure it went to women, that was important. We knew that there were a heap of women who were not registered with the Labour Department . Women on the D.P.B. thought they weren't allowed to register or were told they weren't allowed to register, or they weren't interested in registering because they thought if they did they had to have a full-time job. And we knew those who were registered weren't getting a fair deal anyway. So Femco was aimed at that.*

(Early Board Member)

This had also been the concern of an earlier organisation, The Canterbury Women's Employment Trust, which provided an organisational umbrella for the agency in its establishment phase.

*Although many of us were working in the field it soon became obvious to us that in actuality we were seeing a very small number of unemployed women. We soon realised that we were only meeting women who were willing to go through structured channels. We concluded that we needed some other system for contacting the large number of women who were having difficulty due to lack of employment opportunities. The reason for setting up the Trust was so we would have a system available for doing something practical that would meet the current and future needs of unemployed women. We see one of our functions as advising women just what is available to them and putting them in contact with the appropriate people (Jackson, 1985).*

## 2. THE POLICY ENVIRONMENT

In the late 1970's and early 1980's successive governments attempted to address the issue of women's concentration in a narrow range of occupations by introducing what were called positive action programmes within the Department of Labour. The programmes were aimed at expanding young women's job choices through enhancing their opportunities or training in non-traditional areas. The *Girls Can Do Anything* publicity campaign and the new Apprenticeship Act of 1983, which encouraged women into non-traditional areas of work,

reflected a growing public awareness of the need for women to move into a wider range of jobs. In 1984, the government introduced the Female Apprentice Incentive for Recruitment (FAIR) programme to encourage employers to offer apprenticeships to women in occupations in which they were under-represented. In 1985 these initiatives were consolidated through the establishment of the Positive Action Programme for Women (PAW) in the Department of Labour. The Positive Action Programme for Women saw the appointment of four Senior Employment Officers in the Department of Labour offices throughout New Zealand. The programme had three objectives:

- to increase the employment potential of women registered as unemployed;
- to encourage employers to take on more women referred by the Department, especially into non-traditional jobs; and
- to increase awareness amongst employers, women and the community in general, of the need and scope for wider job opportunities to be made available to women and girls

*(Report of the Working Group on Employment Policy, Appendix 2:7 undated).*

The programme was supplemented by a range of publicity material, including the *Women Can Do Anything* campaign and a checklist for employers on equal employment opportunities.

The Society For Research on Women and the Vocational Training Council published a set of pamphlets relating to women's experiences in non-traditional jobs, especially in the skilled and semi-skilled field. The pamphlets featured interviews with women in a range of occupations in which men predominated including painters, carpenters, fitters and turners, air traffic controllers and traffic officers (Novitz, 1981). The Labour Department also produced a series of publications focusing on women's work aimed primarily for use in schools, to highlight the situation of women in the workforce and provide accurate information on the labour market and the status of women's work. The publication on non-traditional roles in particular, attempted to encourage young women to consider a broader range of occupations. The publication noted for example that the 1981 census material showed that there were nine occupations in which only women were employed and one hundred and thirty eight occupations in which only men were employed (Stevenson, 1986b).



This policy direction by the government to encourage women to consider a wider range of employment options was a continuation and expansion of initiatives introduced prior to 1984. It was also a response to the strength of feminists within the Labour Party who had pushed for an extensive women's policy during the 1984 election campaign.

Under the Access<sup>2</sup> training and employment packages introduced in 1987, women entering non-traditional training were recognised as a 'disadvantaged' group in the labour market, and targeted for assistance. The National Advisory Council on the Employment of Women (N.A.C.E.W.) also increased its public face in the 1980's and actively promoted women's contribution to the economy and worked towards changing social expectations about women's work. As labour legislation improved working conditions overall, attention was directed at making the job market more accessible and encouraging the expansion of women's options. At the same time however, economic policies reduced employment opportunities overall, especially in manufacturing and the skilled trades and registered unemployment rose from 41,415 in 1981 to 73,468 in 1987 (Department of Statistics, 1993).

Femco began in 1986, when there was already considerable support for programmes aimed at expanding women's job choices and increasing women's access to paid employment. The organisation was aware of a number of training programmes in non-traditional occupations and the high levels of joblessness among women. A detailed discussion on joblessness is found in this chapter on p 54. Against the background of these initiatives, Femco decided to provide work for women in non-traditional areas rather than further training. Femco was also concerned that wages for this work would be at a higher level than the rates of pay for occupations in which women had traditionally predominated such as cleaning and machining. The organisation sought to obtain contracts to enable them to provide the work and pay women what it considered was a 'fair wage'. I argue that this attempt by Femco to provide women with a supportive environment in which they could work in non-traditional trades presented considerable problems for the organisation and threatened its founding principles, particularly

---

<sup>2</sup> Access was a fully funded government training programme for unemployed people, run by the Labour Department with an accountability structure of regional Access Councils, representative of the client group and appointed by the Minister of Labour. Courses were offered by community organisations and educational institutions.

when government policy on assistance for voluntary organisations changed. As government sponsored contracts ceased, problems occurred for Femco as it attempted to compete in the private sector, and needed to use the methods of the market place in order to succeed. Commercial competition required offering rates for the job which undercut the tenders of competitors. These strategies were in conflict with Femco's objectives of responding to women's needs, which included flexible, casual work, reasonable rates of pay and recognition of some women's family commitments.

### 3. GENDERED JOBS AND GENDERED LABOUR MARKETS

The need to address the issue of gender-based labour markets is illustrated by the persistence of gendered jobs within the New Zealand labour market. While the proportion of women over 15 in the New Zealand full-time workforce increased in the post war period from 25% in 1951 to 44.7% in 1991, to 54.3% in 1993/4, women remain concentrated in a narrower range of industries and occupations, than men (Statistics New Zealand, 1993: 81; 1994).<sup>3</sup> The different distribution of women and men across industries and occupations is a persistent feature of the labour force in New Zealand, as in many other countries (N.A.C.E.W., 1990: 61-92). Women's concentration in a narrow range of jobs done predominantly by women is also considered to be an important factor in the average earnings difference between men and women, which persists despite the implementation of the Equal Pay Act, 1972.<sup>4</sup> This concentration of women in female dominated jobs has led, over time, to calls for programmes to assist women's entry into a broader range of industries and occupations, into what for

---

<sup>3</sup> Men are quite evenly distributed among the occupational groups. The largest group for males is the 'legislators, administrators and managers group' (16.5%), 'Trades workers group' (16.0%) The smallest occupational group for males is 'clerical workers' (5.3%). Women tend to be concentrated in a much smaller number of occupations 24.4% as clerks and a further 19.8% as service or sales workers. The smallest group for females are 'trades workers' (1.3%) (Statistics New Zealand, 1995).

<sup>4</sup> In February 1994, the average ordinary time hourly earnings for women was \$13.30, 81.3% of the average for men which was \$16.35. This percentage is unchanged from that of five years earlier, but up from 78.8% 10 years ago. Full-time female wage and salary earners are concentrated in the lower income groups. In the year to March 1994, 73% of women earned incomes under \$600 a week. By comparison full-time male wage and salary earners are more evenly spread among the income groups. The percentage of males earning higher levels of income is greater than that for females. Twenty three percent of full-time male income earners had a weekly wage or salary of \$800 or more, compared with 7% of full-time women income earners. 37% of women had a weekly income of less than \$300 from all jobs compared with 14% of men (Statistics New Zealand, 1995: 128-130).

women is, 'non-traditional' work. Broadly, non-traditional work for women can mean any work outside the six major traditional women's occupations of general clerical, teaching, nursing, typing, book keeping, cashiers (Sales) (Department of Statistics and Ministry of Women's Affairs, 1990: 64). Sometimes non-traditional work is more precisely defined as those occupations in which women make up 10% or less of the workers (Churchman, 1989).

These issues have also led to a considerable amount of scholarly work on the labour market over the last three decades. Much of the initial work focused on two major theoretical perspectives: dual or segmented labour market theory (Doeringer and Piore, 1971; Barron and Norris, 1976) and Marxist labour process theory (articulated by Braverman, 1974). Both theories have been the focus of critique by feminists who argued that they neglected gender differences and did not adequately explain women's experience in paid employment. The early feminist work on these theories was carried out largely by Marxist feminists and focused on critiques of the industrial reserve army of labour theory, claiming that women, and married women in particular, function as a disposable and flexible labour force. They argued that women's responsibilities in families contributed to their location in this reserve army of labour (Kuhn and Wolpe, 1978; Beechey, 1978, 1982; Bruegel, 1982, 1986). The work of Heidi Hartmann (1976, 1981), argued that patriarchal relations were the primary reason for gendered inequalities within the labour market, but that it was the conjunction of class and patriarchal interests which produced this effect. She claimed that:

***Job segregation by sex ... is the primary mechanism in capitalist society that maintains the superiority of men over women, because it enforces lower wages onto women in the labour market*** (Hartmann, 1979: 208).

Later work has shown how the recent economic restructuring in Western democracies, has been associated with a decline in manufacturing, the growth of the service sector and the increasing casualisation of the workforce. It is argued that this casualisation, while providing opportunities for women in traditionally gendered jobs has been based on a growth in women's part-time work. Women's labour has been identified as particularly exploitable (Mies, 1986; Cockburn, 1991; Davidson and Bray, 1994). Further studies have sought to explore the relationship between sexuality and employment and have argued that men and women are

constituted as different kinds of workers in the labour market not only when segregated in different occupations, but also even when they are nominally located in the same jobs (Adkins, 1995). The issue of job segregation is a complex one and is therefore not easily defined by single theoretical categories such as 'class', 'patriarchy' or 'capitalism'.<sup>5</sup>

#### 4. GENDERED JOBS: FEMCO'S RESPONSE

From its beginning in late 1986 Femco's focus was to broaden women's work options and to act as a source of information about work and training opportunities. The organisation sought to address the issue of job segregation by attempting to find work for women in skilled and semi-skilled manual and technical jobs usually done by men. In working in this area, Femco focused on providing job opportunities for women who were unlikely or unable to go to university to gain skills to compete in the professional and managerial areas. These decisions in part reflected the backgrounds and positions of the women who set up the organisation, some of whom had grown up in working class families and all of whom were working in the employment field in government departments or local authorities. It also reflected the desire by the founders to obtain higher wages for women. The women believed an independent agency, not constrained by bureaucratic structures and focusing on this sector of the labour market, would be able to make progress on achieving greater economic independence for women. This would be done by improving their access to jobs associated with higher rates of pay than those associated with cleaning, shop work or food processing - the usual occupations in which women without vocational qualifications were concentrated.

Another consideration which influenced Femco's decision to focus on generating work for women in non-traditional jobs was the knowledge that women were being trained in a variety of skills and occupations in 'positive action courses' for women at the local Polytechnic and other initiatives in the late 1980's. Courses such as Introduction to the Trades, Women and Engineering, Motor Mechanics, Woodwork, and Horticulture were run at the Christchurch Polytechnic and at community based private training organisations, under the government funded Access training programme and its predecessor the Training Assistance Programme.

---

<sup>5</sup> For information of detailed ethnography's of workplaces and explorations of women's experiences of employment see Adkins, 1995: 22. For information about the New Zealand experience, see N.A.C.E.W., 1990: 61-92; Statistics New Zealand, 1993: 92-94.

These courses were short in duration and at pre-apprenticeship level. On completion, women were finding it difficult to get jobs where they could practise these skills and gain further qualifications through entering apprenticeship programmes. Despite these positive action measures, women were disadvantaged in their access to jobs and apprenticeships in the male-dominated trades at a time of increasing competition, a drop in apprenticeships<sup>6</sup> offered and rising unemployment.

Femco therefore, saw a need to provide women with the opportunity to both earn better wages and work in areas where they had had some training, but needed further experience. No other agency at the time was taking this initiative. Other groups working with women in employment tended to concentrate on the provision of training and raising awareness of the special needs of women with regard to paid employment. Femco saw a unique opportunity to complement and build on the work being done by the training establishments. The development of a women's labour pool would actually provide women with real work and opportunities to expand, develop and practise these skills. The availability of a pool of women coming out of the courses, funding for positive action initiatives, the *Girls Can Do Anything* and the *Women Can Do Anything* campaigns provided a supportive environment for Femco's decision to develop the labour pool. The women employed came initially from those who had completed the positive action courses, the money from positive action and community development programmes developed by the Departments of Labour and Internal Affairs and the contracts from a sector of the community that was willing to support women in employment initiatives.

*It had become clear that as an extension of the training programmes, women needed to increase and develop their skills in supportive environments if they were to move on to be fully employed in their chosen fields or to move into self-employment. At that stage there was this whole push from New Zealand Employment Service - the Girls Can Do Anything*

---

<sup>6</sup> Between the years March 1988 - June 1993 there was a sharp decline in the number of existing apprenticeships from 26,256 to 11,940 and in the number of new apprenticeships from 7,546 to 2,843. During this period the Apprenticeship Act was repealed and the management of apprenticeships was transferred to Industry Training Organisations (Statistics New Zealand, 1994: 109). In 1986 the proportion of women entering into apprenticeships in the public sector had increased from the previous decade but was still only 55 compared to 2,000 men (Hansen, 1987: 18).

*and the Women Can Do Anything campaigns and courses for women in non-traditional work. Lots of women were trying it at that time and they were coming off the courses and they couldn't get jobs. We were responding to a need.*

(Original Board Member)

Femco also responded to the demand from women for women workers.

*We got a lot of older women wanting (to employ) women because they felt uncomfortable with men coming into their place or they had had bad experiences with men ripping them off and they felt that women wouldn't do that.*

(Administrator)

The organisation tended to define non-traditional work as work located in the skilled and semi-skilled, male-dominated trades area. The issue of 'skill' definition has received some attention from feminists in attempts to further explain job segregation. One approach to gender and skill suggests that women's work is often defined as unskilled because women do it (N.A.C.E.W., 1990: 91-92; Hyman, 1994: 102-104). Femco sought to challenge such assumptions by providing women with work in jobs dominated by men. The aim was to demonstrate that skill level was not determined by gender. Pay rates in these skilled and semi-skilled male-dominated trades were certainly higher and women's participation low (Statistics New Zealand, 1993: 112-115).

Femco had sought the views of a wide variety of women through public meetings and group discussions at community houses before it began any service provision. These discussions identified a number of barriers to full-time waged work for women. These included: childcare needs, lack of flexibility in working hours, lack of confidence, lack of support, lack of training and some women's lack of recognition of their skills as work-related (Operating Guidelines between the Labour Pool Working Party and its umbrella Trust, 1987). In attempting to address these barriers, Femco not only resolved to find the work, but also to respond to women's need for flexibility with regard to hours of work, given the responsibilities many women had outside their paid work. There was also recognition of the special needs of beneficiaries, particularly those on the Domestic Purposes Benefit who often had the sole responsibility for children (Funding Proposal From Femco To The Local Employment and Enterprise Development Scheme, 1989).

*We felt that there was lots of stuff out there that was helping the guys who were disadvantaged and there was nothing out there that was helping the women who were disadvantaged. There was no project that was actually finding women part-time flexible work and that was the main aim.*

(Original Board member)

*Initially Femco existed for the convenience of the women. Like if women have children they have to have child-care; sometimes jobs aren't flexible enough.*

(Early Co-ordinator)

It is well documented that women's participation in paid work in New Zealand is influenced by their household circumstances, and that women take greater responsibility for domestic work, childcare, care of the elderly, and family members with disabilities, than men (Wilson, 1981; Novitz, 1987; Waring, 1988; Ministry of Women's Affairs, 1990b, 1990c; N.A.C.E.W., 1990; Habgood, 1992; Statistics New Zealand, 1993; Hyman, 1994; Edwards and Magarey, 1995).

During the 1980's there were increasing demands for attention to women's employment needs, particularly with regards hours of work and flexibility. Women attending the 1984 Women's Forums placed top priority on the need for job sharing, flexible working hours and part-time work, with availability of childcare also ranking in the top ten priorities (Ministry of Women's Affairs, 1985:17). The Canterbury United Council, in 1985 promoted the notion of sharing paid work and produced a report and kit to encourage both workers and employers to consider the benefits of job-sharing (Canterbury United Council, 1985). In its submission to the 1985 Employment Promotion Conference, The Canterbury Women's Employment Trust argued that women have specific needs in relation to paid employment. The submission stated that:

*Often these needs are related to their position in the family as principal child-carers. This role usually necessitates a period out of the paid workforce and the need for flexibility on re-entry. Permanent paid positions are often unavailable for such women. Socialisation of girls for the role of principal child-carer, occurs irrespective of the realities of individual women's lives, thus narrowing job options for women at the point of entry into the paid*

*workforce. Young women then, often have limited training and work skills when they come to enter the paid workforce* (Canterbury Women's Employment Trust, 1985a).

Femco was aware of the evidence which showed that part-time work for women was concentrated within a relatively limited range of industries and occupations and that the majority of part-time jobs were low paid, insecure, had little status and few promotion prospects, (Moorman, 1982; Dixon, 1986; Novitz, 1987; N.A.C.E.W., 1990; Statistics New Zealand, 1993; Davidson and Bray, 1994). Members of the organisation were keen not to replicate these conditions within its own practice. As an organisation committed to improving women's economic independence, Femco wanted to provide women with work which increased their opportunities in some way. By locating its work in male-dominated areas Femco hoped to avoid the issues of exploitation associated with part-time work. The organisation also believed that women needed to control their own working situation and that this might be achieved by encouraging self-employment and work co-operatives. Femco considered that the development of a labour pool providing flexible work for women, and catering for unemployed women trained within non-traditional work areas, was a way of improving the situation of some women. The labour pool could create a learning environment, a model of alternative ways of working and valuing women's work, provide women with some income and increase their awareness of a broader range of employment options. It was hoped that a supportive environment would increase the confidence and self-esteem of women using Femco, which in turn would enable them to compete more effectively in the labour market and move towards controlling their own working situation. The feminist beginnings of Femco, saw it challenging the notions of both 'women's place' and 'women's worth.' It challenged the view that women's place was in traditionally female jobs and it sought to value the skills of women who did not have formal qualifications.

*We did have that focus (non-traditional work ) and the impetus for that was that non-traditional work pays better - that's why we wanted to encourage women into it. One of the reasons women earn less than men is because they are in jobs that pay less and if you move them into non-traditional jobs they get paid better and we thought that was a good idea .*

(Original Board Member)



## 5. FEMCO AND WORKER'S CO-OPERATIVES

In its attempts to respond to women's needs in this way, Femco was part of the development of the co-operative movement. The increase in work trusts and workers' co-operatives had been an early response to growing unemployment, with a variety of initiatives occurring throughout the country. The Christchurch Employment Resource Centre, the first such centre in New Zealand, for example, operated under the legal entity of The Co-operative Development Forum Inc. and hosted meetings of Trusts and co-operatives where it was not uncommon to have between thirty to fifty groups represented.<sup>7</sup> The Community Enterprise Loan Trust (C.E.L.T.) began as a support network for co-operatives. When faced with the difficulties co-operatives had in borrowing from traditional sources, it developed into a 'peoples bank' specialising in loans for co-operatives. The Co-operative Workers Trust was launched in Auckland in 1985 and produced and distributed a newsletter, *Nga Rongo Korero*, nation-wide.

Co-operatives were seen as a means of empowering people. There was a belief that women could apply co-operative principles to give themselves greater autonomy and flexibility than is usually possible when working in the formal sectors of a capitalist economy. In this context a number of women's co-operatives were established (Hardy, 1982).<sup>8</sup> Government policy supported the growth of these enterprises as one way of addressing the growing unemployment rate and through the Department of Internal Affairs provided financial and advisory services, loans and grants to co-operatives under the Small Co-operative Enterprises Scheme (S.C.O.P.E.)<sup>9</sup>. Femco believed that by providing a supportive environment within the labour pool, women would be able to gain the necessary skills to enter into co-operative forms of working which could suit their needs at any given point in time.

---

<sup>7</sup> See for example *Submission to The New Zealand Government on "A Review of Employment Subsidy Programmes: A Framework for Consultation" November 1984, From Combined Groups and Organisations in the Region of Christchurch*. Forty nine groups were represented in a joint submission endorsed at a meeting in Christchurch.

<sup>8</sup> A study on women workers in the Mondragon co-operatives in Spain however, found that women were clustered at the bottom of pay and occupational hierarchies and concluded that 'women's position s' in non-capitalist workplaces is as disadvantaged as in capitalist workplaces (Hacker and Elcorobairutia, 1987: 359-373).

<sup>9</sup> A description of this programme appears in the *Report of the Working Group on Employment Policy* - prepared for the cabinet Social Equity Committee by a working group convened by the Secretary of Labour, undated, p.12.

## 6. FEMCO AND STATE POLICY

Since 1975 successive governments, had responded to rising levels of unemployment by developing large-scale subsidised employment programmes in the public and community sectors. These programmes had been based, according to the Ministry of Employment in 1984, on two assumptions:

*First that it is possible to help into employment those people who are experiencing difficulty in finding work and second, that employment programmes create additional employment in the economy* (New Zealand Government, 1984: 9).

The programmes were reviewed in 1985 and the consultative document foreshadowed the government's intention to reduce the schemes severely, as it was believed that they were not fulfilling the beliefs stated above. The review stated that:

*Employment subsidy programmes have an important function in providing help to those who are having the most difficulty finding work. It seems that reasonably practical and effective way of deciding who should receive help is based on the length of their unemployment, supplemented with a careful assessment of each individual's needs.*

*Employment subsidies, whatever their aim, incur considerable expenditure. The present level of expenditure on employment programmes evolved in the belief that subsidies were able to significantly increase the number of jobs available. Now that it is recognised that, in fact, the effect of subsidies is to redistribute available jobs, the community must consider what level of resources it is willing to allocate for this purpose* (New Zealand Government, 1984: 11, 13).

All fully subsidised programmes were ended by April 1987. The ending of fully funded employment programmes was a severe blow to the newly established Femco. The planning of the organisation had taken place in a policy environment which provided substantial resources for the initiatives it was proposing. The Contract Work Scheme, for example provided community contractors with subsidies for wage costs, covered material costs and often enabled the organisation to make a profit. The Project Employment Programme (P.E.P.) and the Voluntary Organisation Training Programme (V.O.T.P.) schemes, paid full wage, materials

and administration costs (Department of Internal Affairs, 1991). Femco had used as its models organisations which were using these schemes. Just as the organisation had reached a stage where it could begin to provide paid work, large scale government assistance was withdrawn. This new funding environment put severe constraints on Femco in the early stages of development. Like many a small business it was under capitalised and under-skilled (Haines, 1991: 36-37).

*With the Contract Work Scheme the guys were making a mint and we weren't making a penny. We needed a Contract Work Scheme - if we had got that much money we wouldn't have cared how long it took to paint a bloody fence. We could have got women out there doing the same sort of work as them but what we had to do was compete with other people out there - so when you think about it we were pretty game really.*

(Founding Board Member)

The phasing out of fully funded programmes was in line with the government's focus on reduction of government intervention in the economy and the maximisation of individual responsibility. Fully subsidised programmes were replaced with training programmes aimed at providing unemployed people with vocational skills to enable them to move into unsubsidised work and separate funding was established for community social services. The new programmes had specific targeted assistance to those disadvantaged in the labour market - women in non-traditional work being one of those categories (Burke, 1985). Femco was able to provide for the target group, but received less government assistance and needed to find ways of complementing the funds by accessing charitable trusts, seeking private sector contracts and finally by diversifying its activities. The way in which this diversification was directed by government policy changes and the effects on Femco is discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

While Femco took advantage of a policy environment which continued to provide some state support for its initiatives, that policy environment was also contradictory. Just as some progress was being made on the implementation of equal employment opportunity programmes across a range of government departments, the Fourth Labour Government was pursuing a major programme of economic restructuring. The aim was to create an economy which was more flexible and responsive to world market conditions. Changes included

reduction of trade barriers, removal of export subsidies and supplementary minimum prices, deregulation of the transport and financial services industries, and a broadening of the taxation base. Monetary policy aimed at reducing the rate of inflation was accompanied by recession, low investment, reduced export price competitiveness (due to an appreciating exchange rate) and rising levels of unemployment (Boston and Holland, 1987; Economic Monitoring Group, 1989; Waldergrave, 1987; Shannon, 1991; Kelsey, 1993; Hyman, 1994; Prime Ministerial Task force on Employment, 1994). The policies had contradictory effects for women with some women being advantaged and others disadvantaged and by some policies producing positive indicators and others negative (N.A.C.E.W., 1990: 98-118; Du Plessis, 1992: 209-220; Hyman, 1994). The policy of restructuring the public sector in an attempt to reduce public debt was particularly controversial and contradictory given the Government's equal employment opportunity and women's policies. As economic commentators have noted:

*A major (and controversial) element of the fiscal strategy of recent years has been the priority given to maintaining a consistent approach to reductions in the fiscal imbalance - irrespective of output and employment conditions* (Economic Monitoring Group, 1989: 119).

N.A.C.E.W. (1990), concluded that state sector restructuring and the development of state owned enterprises between 1984-88 produced contradictory outcomes for women. While overall numbers of women employed in the sector increased during that period, women did not gain a representative share of the new jobs created in the State Owned Enterprises and government departments, and wages and conditions in some areas fell. Re-deployment policy, for example, worked against EEO policies and helped to carry gender imbalances across into the new departments and State Owned Enterprises (N.A.C.E.W., 1990: 117).

The major consequence of these policies was large-scale redundancies and rapidly rising unemployment. The initial stage of the restructuring saw the loss of approximately 100,000 jobs, mostly in the manufacturing and the reorganised state sectors (*Prime Ministerial Task Force on Employment*: 30). This occurred at a time of government cuts to social services, privatisation of state owned enterprises and changes in industrial relations policy (Boston, 1987; Gregory, 1987; Scott, 1987; Hyman, 1994). The Labour Relations Act 1987 and the State Sector Act 1988 were aimed at directing the wage-fixing system away from national

awards towards more decentralised bargaining and opening the way for industry and enterprise bargaining. This was in line with government policy of deregulation and was motivated by the belief that the labour market was particularly inflexible. Hyman has argued that the effects of such policies on women are unclear and likely to be contradictory, with some groups of women being advantaged while others are disadvantaged (Hyman, 1994). The Acts did, for example, include components that addressed issues of concern to feminist activists. An example of this is the inclusion of sexual harassment in the personal grievance sections of the Industrial Relations Act and the requirement in the State Sector Act for equal employment opportunity policies and procedures.

Women were particularly hard hit in the initial stages of the recession largely because they were concentrated in such a limited range of jobs and industries, but also because they were over represented in jobs which are part-time, casualised and in sectors of the economy which experienced recessionary pressures first. Women employed in the manufacturing sector (11% of employed women) were concentrated in the textile and clothing industries which saw a decline in employment of 15.6 % between 1977 and 1984 (Department of Labour, 1977-1984).

In addition, women's unemployment is likely to be higher than is apparent from official statistics because of the way it is measured. In the official measurement of unemployment, a person is classified as unemployed if she or he satisfies three criteria - not currently employed, available for work, and actively seeking work. A broader measure called "the jobless" is used to include an estimate of all people who are without a paid job and who have given some indication that they would like one (Statistics New Zealand, 1993). Women are more likely to be jobless than men (Shipley, 1982; N.A.C.E.W., 1990; Statistics New Zealand, 1993). Femco was often working with women who were in the 'jobless' category, particularly those on benefits other than the unemployment benefit. In 1986, women's joblessness was 10.1% compared to 5.3% for men (Statistics New Zealand, 1993: 99).

Femco, whilst having considerable political and practical support for its overall objectives, was faced with the contradiction of attempting to raise awareness and consciousness among employers and employees alike, in an economic environment which, in general, was hostile to

these objectives. The economy was being de-regulated and the individual firm was now being exposed to international competitiveness. Just as Femco was attempting to facilitate women's entry into non-traditional jobs, pressures were affecting industries which had usually provided that employment. For example, the industry sector most adversely affected by the economic down-turn and restructuring of the 1980's was manufacturing, where total employment declined by 26% for women and 24% for men between 1986 and 1991 (Statistics New Zealand, 1993: 91). A number of Government departments, which had traditionally played a vital role in training were cutting staff and becoming state-owned enterprises. This was therefore a difficult time to pursue affirmative action programmes in non-traditional work as jobs in these fields were decreasing rather than expanding.

***I think it was a bad time for women full stop and bad timing for anyone who wanted to be a plumber or builder. Women were coming out of the courses all fired up to work and no building site to work on - no plumbing to do - no nothing. No-one wanted to give them jobs.***

(Early Co-ordinator)

In response to these pressures Femco decided to provide work for women by becoming an employer itself. The consequences of this decision and the difficulties the organisation faced are discussed later in this chapter (See pp 56-68).

## **7. FEMCO AND THE OPERATION OF THE LABOUR POOL**

### **7.1 Accessing Resources**

Initially Femco received monetary support from a Lottery Board Grant in 1986 and a Community Development Grant (Internal Affairs Department) in 1987. It also had practical support from the employment field workers who were still employed in various government agencies and local authorities during this period. Femco developed a resource centre and provided training in the form of workshops and seminars on marketing, setting up co-operatives, and options for re-entering the workforce. On-going funding for training was secured through the Community Education Department at Hagley High School, providing tutor hours for Femco to run programmes at community centres and neighbourhood cottages.

In 1988 the Regional Employment Access Council (REAC), the statutory body set up to administer the Access training programme, granted Femco funding to begin the labour pool.

The funding was allocated from the Council's discretionary budget which had been set aside for projects targeted at encouraging local employment initiatives. Women involved in the establishment of Femco had also been involved with the working party on the Access Council and there was strong representation of women and community organisations on the first Council, who gave support to strategies directed at addressing women's employment issues.<sup>10</sup> All REAC's throughout the country were required to have a women's representative to represent women's training and employment needs.

The funding was a recognition of the role the labour pool could play in the employment and support of women who had been trained on Access programmes, particularly those from the 'Women in Trades' courses and pre-apprenticeship courses in non-traditional work. Several of these courses were run at the Christchurch Polytechnic and by the Canterbury Women's Employment Trust, the original umbrella organisation for Femco.

## 7.2 Providing the Work

The labour pool focused on house painting, wallpapering, gardening, carpentry and odd jobs. These were identified as areas in which the organisation could initially use relatively unskilled labour. Femco also considered that it could provide flexibility in working hours and training in these fields of work. They were also areas in which some of the women who did have experience could supervise others and/or control for quality. In addition, Femco was influenced by the needs and skills of the women registering with the labour pool. These areas were also related to the courses being run for women in the various training establishments.<sup>11</sup> In its funding proposal to the Local Employment and Enterprise Development Scheme in 1989, Femco identified its markets as:

- (a) People interested in supporting women to become economically independent.
- (b) Women living alone who feel safer with women working in their homes.
- (c) Busy over committed working couples earning over \$40,000 a year.

<sup>10</sup> The membership of the Access Council was made up of three employer representatives, three trade union representatives, and six community representatives. Two of the community representatives and one of the trade union representatives on the Canterbury Council were women. In addition, all the community representatives were supportive of women's issues.

<sup>11</sup> The Canterbury Women's Employment Trust ran courses for women in horticulture, motor mechanics, and woodwork. (Trust publicity material, 1987-89). The Christchurch Polytechnic ran a variety of positive action courses including Introduction to the Trades for Women and Expanding Job Choices for Women. (Interview, Polytechnic Tutor, 1995).

- (d) People looking for a reliable competitively priced building maintenance service.

The client group offering their labour were defined as:

- (a) Women receiving a benefit and wanting to become self-sufficient.
- (b) Women who had been made redundant or whose partner had been made redundant.
- (c) Women who had been caring for dependants or relatives and now needed to move into the paid workforce.
- (d) Women who were looking for on-the-job training after training in non-traditional areas of work (*Funding Proposal From Femco to the Local Employment And Enterprise Development Scheme 1989*).

In order to fulfil its objectives of providing flexible employment, valuing women's work and work in non-traditional fields, Femco decided they needed to control all aspects of the work process and become work providers themselves. Finding work with existing employers meant losing control of wage rates and hours of work. Simple referral would exclude the less confident.

***That was the only way some women were going to get work - by us providing the contracts and getting this work for them. On their own they were powerless to do that kind of thing so we felt that us getting the contracts and setting up these things for them was the only way they were going to get work.***

(Long standing Board Member)

This raised the issue of creating dependency among the women using the labour pool, so the organisation provided training and workshops on a variety of topics for the labour pool workers. However, not all the women who got work through the pool took advantage of these courses/workshops and it was not easy to encourage women in the labour pool to become independent contractors. The nature of the work and the way the labour pool operated also mitigated against this to some degree. Good, keen, reliable workers were to become a necessity for the smooth operation of the labour pool and the continual training was to become a financial burden for the organisation. Keeping a balance of skilled and less skilled workers was important but not always possible as the organisation grew and faced conflicting demands



from those providing the contracts and those providing the labour. In retrospect those involved in Femco can identify contradictions in its practice.

*I saw it as a place that created dependency. Also the costs that we were charging clients were too high because of that. If we'd sent women out on their own the costs could have been lower and I think we would have been more effective. But I'm still not clear about where you help someone and where you stop helping them when the support is needed in some way. But women just kept coming back to us without thinking anything through for themselves and we were responsible for that because we were the employer. It certainly wasn't the way for the organisation to make any money and be an effective organisation or work in a business-like way .*

(Early Administrator)

On the one hand Femco was providing a model of independent women gaining contracts and working in male-dominated areas, while on the other it was creating a dependency among its client group. This factor was not openly acknowledged by Femco's Board who saw the dependency as what the women brought to the organisation rather than a consequence of their organisational strategies. The organisation was there to help these women move towards independence and it would do this by providing a supportive environment. This was to develop into a fundamental organisational problem which was not fully addressed until the financial crisis in 1994.

### 7.3 The Working Environment

Femco was also directed at providing a supportive working environment for women. The need for this grew out of an awareness of work situations which discouraged women entering traditionally male jobs:

*I've had dealings with a number of young women who've come to me for work experience from Polytech doing either pre-apprenticeship courses or the women and wood courses that were going there, and they have rather horrific stories to tell of how they are treated on the course and in the workplace. Not being able to get work, not being able to get apprenticeships, having to put up with verbal harassment, and in some cases saying " Well we don't have to put up with this - why bother?" I can think of two people in particular*

*both were actually University graduates, and they had gone overseas and come back and decided they wanted to do woodwork, so they weren't fresh behind the ears, and they still, in both cases could not be bothered putting up with the constant flak and in both cases gave it away.*

(Long standing Board Member)

Literature on women working in non-traditional occupations documents the sexism and harassment women can face in their day to day work, particularly if they are the only female on the job (Novitz, 1981; Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet Australia, 1985; Stevenson, 1986; Broadsheet, 1986-1991; Worth, 1995; Baynes, 1995; N.S.W. Department of Industrial Relations Women's Directorate, 1986; Kuiper, 1986; Leith, 1986; Blumberg, 1991). Femco, and the local newspaper were subjected to a barrage of abusive and angry callers after an advertisement had been placed for a woman painter, despite previous editorial coverage and an exemption from the Human Rights Commission to run a woman-only organisation and advertise for women employees (Femco, 1989).

The situation can be exacerbated in times of high unemployment, as an Australian study noted:

*Some males were extremely hostile both to the entry of females into areas of 'men's work', particularly in the context of male unemployment in the trades, and to the 'special attention' that they perceived females to have received* (N.S.W. Department of Industrial Relations, Women's Directorate, 1986: 29).

Femco sought to overcome these barriers by becoming the contractor and by modelling to other employers the range of skills many women have. Undertaking to operate as a contractor was also seen as a way of demonstrating to women working within the labour pool that it was possible for women to be in business.

*It was a co-operative - working in a co-operative manner to get women working in teams. We were working in teams and through those teams to get women skills so that eventually they could set up in businesses of their own. That was the whole philosophy at the time and I thought it was a marvellous ideal.*

(Long standing Board Member)

*We had to establish a reputation that we could paint a house or clean up a section. We needed to gain credibility as an employment service and as a labour pool.*

(Early Co-ordinator)

By the end of 1988, Femco had secured funding from the Community Organisation Grants Scheme, the funding agency set up to fund community projects after the cessation of full wage subsidies in 1987. It had also obtained smaller amounts from the Department of Internal Affairs, the Christchurch City Council and private philanthropic trusts.

This funding enabled Femco to employ a co-ordinator to find the work and quote for contracts, and a community worker to assess the skills, qualifications and experience of the workers. Femco had identified the need for these complementary roles, both of which required a considerable amount of time and the women employed to carry out the tasks needed excellent communication and organisational skills. They also needed to be able to work together and to ensure there was good communication between them.

*My job was to get a group - a pool of women who were available to work and I think, although this was never overtly stated, to look after them, to take care of women who in a sense were not work ready. There was a conflict in trying to look after women and expecting them to be work ready because you were putting them in a work situation.*

(Early Co-ordinator)

*We both had very specific job descriptions. I think that worked quite well. It was a good way of doing it.*

(Early Co-ordinator)

In January 1989, Femco completed its first painting job. The experience with this job illustrated a number of issues which were not easy to resolve given the philosophy of the organisation and what it was actually trying to achieve. The problems centred around two major issues - the quality of the work and the reliability of the workers. Some workers had proved unreliable. Flexibility of employment could mean not turning up for work and not telling anyone. The quality of the work was not up to standard and had to be repeated. The result was a financial loss on the job. The co-ordinators concluded that for painting jobs there needed to be an experienced supervisor to ensure the work was done in an efficient and cost

effective way. They also believed that the women on the 'painting crew' needed to be able to work together and they resolved to encourage a group of workers who had the expectation of eventually becoming self-employed.

This tension between providing quality work and the use of inexperienced workers - the client group of Femco - was difficult to resolve. The financial problems caused by this tension were to be repeated over the years as Femco tried to remain loyal to the client group of women seeking paid work, but also to continue as a contractor within the private sector. The difficulty was that Femco had two sets of clients - the women wanting work and the people wanting services. Sometimes the issue was one of confidence in the worker's ability and at other times the issue was conflict between ideals and reality. Being flexible and understanding about women's out of work commitments was, an important philosophical plank of the organisation. The definition of what was reasonable with regards 'out of work commitments' was, however, often a matter of keen debate. The co-ordinators dealing with the contract had to make their own decisions and at times this was in conflict with the Board and with the women workers.

*I had to try and compromise between allowing women the flexibility they needed, because they do, women with children need some flexibility. They've got to get their kids to the child-carer, sometimes they have to leave at three. I had to weigh that up with the reality of actually getting the jobs done and on time. I had to be fair to the other workers who didn't have children, who were able to start at eight and finish at five, who were willing to work on the week-end if the job dictated. Some workers ended up not being asked to work because they weren't willing to co-operate. Even convincing some people to ring up if they weren't coming in was difficult, because they felt that because it was a women's organisation you shouldn't have to do that.*

*Some of the women on the Board were finding it difficult to realise that some of that flexibility was going to have to go. Where do we draw the line between the people having time off, working part-time, working casually, and getting the job done with credibility. At the end of the day if your customer is not happy with what you've done they're not going to recommend you. We were dealing with people who's life and standards were totally*

*different. That doesn't mean it's wrong, they were just totally different. We had a significant number of women working that way. It did get quite volatile.*

(Early Co-ordinator)

As larger commercial jobs were attempted it became clear that such jobs involved a greater risk and needed a higher level of skill from the workers. Such workers were not always available and at times those who were available were not always totally committed to the job.

*Work readiness and not being committed to their work life because of personal difficulties or having been out of work for so long, that it was actually very difficult them to commit to something that was so erratic anyway. So that combination made it difficult for women to commit to Femco. Femco may have been seen as an easier option and would use women even if they hadn't functioned well to give them another chance.*

(Early Co-ordinator)

*Femco attracted a higher percentage than normal of people who saw an opportunity to work the way they wanted to simply because it offered the alternative work ways which meant different things to different people.*

(Early Co-ordinator)

#### 7.4 Skill

From the beginning the issue of the relative skill and payment of the workers was problematic. Femco was concerned with valuing women's work in all spheres, and was keen to acknowledge women's informal skills as well as formal qualifications. It sought to enable women to participate in paid work and be well remunerated for their efforts. So, all workers were initially paid the same hourly rate regardless of skill, qualification or experience. At this time many women's groups and organisations were challenging the male-defined categories of skill, and qualifications. They were also arguing that experience women gained in activities such as child-care and voluntary work could be translated into the paid workforce if they were interpreted correctly. Women were encouraged, for example to see activities such as Play

Centre treasurers as using the same skills as pay clerks, and the initial work of the labour pool emphasised these issues.<sup>12</sup>

*At the Resource Centre we worked on a series of things and we ran two hour morning sessions - things like confidence building. What skills do you have? Are they transferable? What skills do you want?*

(Early Board Member)

Valuing women's skills was important when women registered for work with the labour pool.

*If a woman walked in the door and said I'm a carpenter - then we called her a carpenter rather than saying Where's your trade certificate where's this, where's that? If a woman walked in the door we didn't want to put her through the same sort of stuff that she was getting other places - like you've got no skills, no this, no that, you've only been a bloody mother for years etcetera. So basically we made a point of believing what somebody said and with all the best intentions in the world, a lot of times what the woman said she was capable of and what we were asking her to do didn't match up. For instance in painting there's a big leap from painting your bedroom at home to going out and doing it for someone else and it was kind of that leap that we always had trouble getting over. I feel like we did get over it eventually, but we had a few problems, with the quality and cost. I never felt that any one was misleading anybody or that the women who were doing the jobs weren't trying hard enough. It was just one of those things we had to learn.*

(Early Co-ordinator)

Others within the organisation had misgivings about this way of working.

*In a sense I always worried about that. I think it was a bit lax. We assumed that because women said they could do something, they could. That worried me a bit. It's happened in*

---

<sup>12</sup> The Next Step Centre at the Polytechnic provided women with exercises to identify these skills and how to re-define them in the language of the market, in their Updating Skills for Women courses 1988-90 (Interview with tutor from the Next Step Centre, 1995).

*lots of women's organisations. Maybe the quality was not that good at times.*

(Early Board Member)

The issue of quality was to become an even greater problem later when profitability margins narrowed and Femco was faced with stronger competition for contracts.

The experience of the first painting job highlighted the need for an experienced supervisor. The co-ordinator, up to this point had been responsible for quality control and she could call on tradeswomen to help, but clearly in the case of painting a lot of damage could be done if people on the job weren't skilled enough, or responsible.

*I can remember going around and doing a bit of quality watching. When a job had happened I went and had a look. In fact I can remember a couple of jobs I had to intervene on the Femco's behalf because they were messy and I had to promise - and do my tactful patching up saying, "Yes, of course we'll fix this up".*

(Long standing Board Member)

*The hassle was finding the really experienced women to supervise those women. For a lot of women it was experimental. It wasn't something they wanted to do as a career path, but that wasn't the need we had identified.*

(Founding Member)

At this early stage of the operation of the labour pool (1988-89) the main consideration was the needs of the women registered for work with the Femco. The work would be found first and then the appropriate women contacted to do the work. Given that Femco was encouraging flexibility, in practice this meant that jobs went to whoever was available at the time and high levels of skill would not always be the pre-requisite for getting the job. By the end of 1989 seventy women were registered with Femco as looking for work, and Femco had secured an average of 45 hours work per month which was shared between these women. The matching of women to the jobs was a problem at times as there was not always enough work to go around, or work suitable to the skills of those registered. This imbalance between workers and availability of work was addressed in part by the provision of training workshops, at a nominal cost, for the women registered with Femco.

These included:

Trailer backing	-	25 women attended
Heavy trade licence	-	18 women attended.
Lawn mower maintenance	-	18 women attended.

The popularity of these workshops and the increasing numbers of women registering with the labour pool, encouraged Femco to try to increase the amount of work it could provide. Initially, most of the contracts were obtained through the agency's women's networks and people who wanted to encourage women's development in a wide range of activities.

*A lot of our customers were known to the organisation and were basically doing it as a favour and some of them would have eventually paid more money than they would have if they got someone else to do it.*

(Early Co-ordinator)

This trend continued, with the majority of the contracts obtained by the agency being small and being supplied by private individuals rather than commercial firms. The exceptions were a large lawn-mowing contract for the Christchurch City Council, some work for the real estate firm Cowdy and Co and work for a firm of builders. In the early stages of the labour pool these private contracts enabled the women to work in supportive environments with little pressure on cost effectiveness or efficiency. Most of the contracts were small and the providers were tolerant and undemanding. For example, a regular client continued to use the service despite having her tulips mowed over by the women contracted to mow her lawns. Femco had also received grants, which offset some of the costs of the operation of the labour pool and in effect masked the real operational costs. From the beginning, painting contracts were the most numerous and continued to be so throughout this study period. Very small jobs were rarely profitable due to the overhead costs and the small margins. The difficulty of finding skilled painters was also a constant problem as was the issue of quality. This was addressed first in 1989, by the employment of a supervisor who was an experienced painter



and again later in 1991, with the employment of a qualified tradeswoman. This was an outcome of the recognition of the need for constant supervision on the job, given the skill level of most of the workers. This point was raised when Femco applied for membership to the Canterbury Painting Contractors Association in 1990. The initial application was refused as the standard of work was not high enough. Membership was finally granted in 1992.

### **7.5 Femco and Expansion**

Femco grew steadily from 1989. The average number of women registered rose from 70 to 95 in 1990, with a drop to 67 in 1991 and from 1992 a steady average of 100. Most of the women registered with Femco (80% in 1991) were on benefits, primarily the domestic purposes or the unemployment benefit. Femco, in the early stages of the organisation was primarily providing casual work for women on benefits. These women wanted to increase their income to the allowable limit before their benefit would be abated.<sup>13</sup> This use of the labour pool was in tension with Femco's commitment to encouraging women to become economically independent. However Femco could not guarantee these women full-time employment, so earning enough through the labour pool to come off the benefit was difficult. Most women were not prepared to take the risk of a shortfall in income if they earned more than the allowable limit, but less than full-time wages, and so were unavailable for work once the limit had been reached.

The drop in numbers of women registered in 1991 can be explained by changes in staff in the office and the rising unemployment rate which saw the labour pool trading in a very competitive market and having difficulty providing for the client group. New government policies were also encouraging the development of small enterprises, which were competing directly with the agency. (The Enterprise Allowance which provided a wage subsidy for unemployed people entering self-employment had been introduced in 1990.) In addition, more and more people were 'buying jobs' with their redundancy packages by entering self employment. Femco's 1991 Annual Report notes that many people who were redundant and unemployed were mowing lawns, gardening, and doing exactly what Femco was without the

---

<sup>13</sup> This had changed substantially by 1994 and the reasons and consequences are discussed on pp 30-31.

overheads. Femco struggled to maintain its radical focus and had difficulty achieving its stated aims of assisting those most in need and responding to the needs of women in employment.

*Running the labour pool as a business meant that you couldn't really support the women who decided not to turn up that day or who needed child-care or were on the dole so therefore only wanted to work two hours. I saw that as really idealistic and not at all practical. It didn't fit in with the business idea and that's really sad. Coming from that place was not the way to go into business. It was a long way to go.*

(Early Administrator)

The fluctuation in work, often due to seasonal factors, meant a high turnover of women available for work as those wanting more regular work looked elsewhere or as those with good skills and commitment were offered more permanent work by other employers. This in part led to Femco attempting to offer more hours to each worker to keep experienced workers and to provide better quality of work.

Table 1 shows the growth in women registering with the labour pool, the total number of labour hours per month and the average number of women working each month. The increases from 1990 were due to an increase in painting work which followed the employment of qualified painters in 1991 and 1992 and the winning of a major lawn mowing contract with the Christchurch City Council in 1992. These large contracts enabled Femco to provide more hours of work. While accurate comparisons are difficult as statistics were not kept in the same form from year to year, it is clear from staff reports that the trend by 1992 was for more hours to be worked by fewer women.

**TABLE 1**

	<b>Average number of women registered in any one month.</b>	<b>Total number of hours worked per month.</b>	<b>Average number of women working per month.</b>
1989	70	45	24
1990	95	145	35
1992	100	500	25
1994 ( JAN)	100	1000	20

By the beginning of 1994, Femco was employing three full time workers and three casuals in a gardening and lawn mowing crew, four full-time and six casuals in a painting crew and six casuals in a cleaning team. Three full-time equivalent, administrative office staff were also employed. The competitive nature of the work, particularly in gardening and painting, had meant, by necessity, the development of a consistent and reliable workforce requiring less supervision.

*I felt that we were having a lot of women come through and a lot of them were not feeling well served because a lot of the time they would be asked to go out to do a job and they wouldn't have the knowledge to get it done. We weren't turning out a good product. They were feeling that I was yelling at them because they weren't doing a good enough job and they felt they didn't have the skills, so to turn out a better product and make the client happy we needed to get a full time supervisor so the numbers of women on the payroll every week did go down but at that point we began employing women on a full time basis.*

(Early Co-ordinator)

This development, while commercially sensible, was in conflict with Femco's commitment to provide casual, flexible, part-time work. The need for a stable skilled workforce had been recognised in the painting area after the difficulties associated with the first contract and Femco had attempted many ways of addressing the issue. A pay scale based on skill was introduced in 1991 and a qualified tradeswoman employed in the same year in an effort to ensure good quality and to train unskilled workers. The gaining of a City Council lawn mowing contract in 1992 raised the same issue in the gardening area. These clients required high standards and were not the tolerant and understanding 'known' customers of Femco's first jobs (See page 64). The difficulties were compounded by some women wanting (or needing) to work limited hours. Femco was competing in a commercial world that assumed workers would be available forty hours a week. Providing workers in this environment eventually became very problematic for Femco.

Femco was building an organisation around the needs of women rather than just making allowances for those needs. They wanted to validate and value women's experience and see those experiences as strengths rather than weaknesses.

*A woman comes in and says I've got between the hours of nine to three to work - then we actually tried to fit in with her rather than saying - well this is the job lady - it's eight to five thirty and I don't give a damn if you've got to pick up your kids at three or whatever it was - we were saying your primary job is what she does between the hours of three in the afternoon and nine in the morning - and we were trying to provide her with something to help her with that primary job.*

(Early Co-ordinator)

Building an organisation which was providing paid work in areas not traditionally occupied by large numbers of women and at the same time attempting to organise their paid work around women's unpaid work was an extremely challenging task, given the commercial environment discussed earlier. It was however, fundamental to the original philosophy of the agency.

*It made things difficult. It meant that we might have two people doing the job. On the painting team one woman would work three days and one would work two. They were basically doing a full time job but neither of them, for various reasons, wanted to, or were able to work five days a week. Lack of continuity can create difficulties and maybe that was part of the reason we weren't making too much money.*

(Early Co-ordinator)

This philosophy was to prove even more difficult to adhere to when changes in government funding levels and criteria saw the agency moving into more commercially focused enterprises and diversifying from the original non-traditional focus. This shift was made in the early 1990's with the express aim of giving the agency some autonomy from government funding and providing the opportunity to make money using the community business model. The plan was to use any profits to provide for the social aspects of the agency's work. The consequences of this for the agency's original focus created continual tension and will be discussed in Chapter 4.

## **7.6 Employment Legislation**

The introduction of the Employment Contracts Act in 1991 further deregulated the labour market and had a dramatic effect on the operation of the labour pool by Femco. Under the Act, industrial agreements were given the status of binding enforceable contracts, strikes could only

occur when new contracts were being negotiated and employers were given more freedom to chose whether to negotiate with the agents chosen by employees. Hyman has argued that:

*With only a slow economic upturn, these changes have helped produce a widening of the gaps between high-and low-income groups, between men and women, and between Pakeha and Maori.*

*For many, the Act has meant the widening of pay differentials and an erosion of conditions* (Hyman, 1994: 123).

The Act also had the effect of lowering wages overall and therefore Femco found itself paying too high a rate to compete in the market place. The Employment Contracts Act was the logical step for economic policy focusing on the individual and the market. The restructuring of the labour market was essential for the continuation of the market led reforms of the state sector and of New Zealand's protected industrial sector. It has been argued that:

*It is fundamental to the New Right philosophy which prescribes that equity will arise from the market place and that interventionist legislation is unnecessary* (Lewis, cited in Sayers, 1992: 226).

Such a view assumes, of course, that the market place has an interest in equity. It could be argued instead that equity will arise from the market place only if it is profitable to do so. As yet the link between equality and profitability is unproved.

The government policies on this rather different interpretation of labour market flexibility have continued to define the context in which Femco has operated as a community enterprise and are reinforced by employers and their associations. Steve Marshall, Chief Executive of the New Zealand Employer's Federation, insisted that any change to the Employment Contracts Act would mean:

*The loss of business confidence, loss of enterprise efficiency and corresponding loss of employment opportunities. Change to a more collectivised and interventionary system would be very damaging. This concern, however, cannot be allowed to detract from their*

*determination to achieve workplace relationships on which competitive success can be built. So in the industrial relations environment of tomorrow employers and employees will be co-operatively striving for competitive success in their joint and separate interests* (Marshall, 1994).

Women unionists however, have argued that most women are disadvantaged in this situation because, among other things, their current position in the labour force means they have little bargaining power. Furthermore, as Sayers argues :

*Women have not had the opportunities in the past and cannot overnight gain the skills and the education that they need to compete in this sort of fashion. In reality there is little choice or freedom for women* (Sayers, 1992: 234).

The repeal of the Employment Equity Act 1990 coupled with the introduction of the Employment Contracts Act and the 1990 benefit cuts, reinforced an individualistic free enterprise philosophy and created further contradictions for Femco. On the one hand, the Employment Contracts Act paved the way for the growth in both part-time work and an expanding peripheral, casualised workforce consistent with Femco's aim of providing flexible work options for women. On the other, increased competition and less collective protection for workers meant the lowering of wages overall and the inability of Femco to fulfil its aim of valuing women's work by providing adequate recompense. The benefit cuts initially widened the gap between benefits and wages, but there is some evidence to suggest that wages have fallen as beneficiaries underbid for low paid jobs (Sayers, 1992: 229). Femco drew largely from a casualised temporary workforce, and was primarily providing services for what has been termed the elitist service class which has grown to demand a service of its own - gardeners, childcare workers, domestic workers and home maintenance workers (Sayers, 1992: 231). The conditions within this sector led to recommendations within Femco to lower its pay rates and offer differentials for various workers. This was a substantial change from philosophy with respect to wage rates pioneered when the labour pool was established in 1989, when all workers were paid \$10 per hour, regardless of type of work or experience.

*Our pay scale was out of this world really because we felt women were being undervalued as it was in society and they were being asked to work for nothing at all and we felt that was*

*one step we could take, so we did. We were unrealistic at the time. We found we were running at losses. We just couldn't sustain these kinds of things. We couldn't compete in the commercial world and then we were failing everything because we couldn't make this whole system work.*

(Long standing Board member)

*You can't pay market rates if you're not making market money. If you haven't got a financial base to start with, the marketing skills and something to market, you can't afford to pay those rates. But the problem was that the women doing the jobs couldn't survive unless we paid them realistically. We felt if women were working for Femco we should value their work and pay them what they were worth. We needed to pay that to keep them loyal too, or we lost them. I think there were a lot of unrealistic hopes and dreams.<sup>14</sup>*

(Early Co-ordinator)

In 1991 Femco provided individual employment contracts to all workers which contained recognition of women's particular interests as much as was possible. These contracts offered above minimum wages and holidays and sick leave provisions. There was no discussion however, about the effect of the government's policies overall or whether the organisation should align itself with the voice of protest as it had in the early stages of its existence. In fact, by this time Femco had moved into the provision of other services - delivering business advisory services to a different client group. This made dissension difficult particularly on issues other than assistance to small business. These factors will be discussed in Chapter 4.

In 1991 Femco changed its policy on pay rates and introduced a sliding scale based on skill. By 1993 a further contraction in wages occurred. Trainees were to be paid travel expenses to the job and paid for the hours they worked only if they were actually doing work on their own. Casual labour would be paid \$7.50 - \$8.00 per hour, permanent staff \$8.25 - \$9.00 per hour, supervisors \$12 - \$13 per hour. The wages being paid at the time (1993) were from \$9 - \$11.65 per hour for workers, with no distinction between casual or permanent staff, and \$10 - \$12 for supervisors. The new rates were still way above the minimum wage of \$6.12 per

---

<sup>14</sup> A worker employed by Femco in 1990-91, when interviewed for this study stated that she had never been paid so well, as when she was working for Femco, either before or since.

hour and at the top end of the wages being paid for this type of work, but compared reasonably favourably with Femco's competitors.

At the time of the repeal of the Employment Equity Act the Labour Department disestablished the advisory positions for women which had been set up within the Department in 1985. There were consequently fewer Department of Labour field staff available to assist with the development of Femco and to serve on management committees. This factor, coupled with Femco's move into business advisory services, saw a subtle shift in the composition of the Board and changes in policy direction which were to have a significant effect on the organisation's core business. These changes will be the focus of discussion in Chapters 4 and 5.

## 8. CONCLUSION

Femco's decision to diversify from its original focus of a work provider for women in non-traditional areas, was motivated by the organisation's desire for survival rather than the needs of women in this area. In the five years of operation of the labour pool little had changed for women wanting to work in jobs dominated by men. A short piece of research undertaken by Femco in 1994, confirmed this situation (Moreland, 1994). The research revealed that funding was available for courses, initiatives and scholarships for women in non-traditional work during the early and mid 1980's and withdrawn in the late 1980's and early 1990's. Little new information had been produced since the late 1980's and the numbers of women in non-traditional jobs in trades dominated by men had barely changed over the last twenty years (Statistics New Zealand, 1993: 92). Women were only a fifth of participants in trades courses at training organisations and institutes such as Christchurch Polytechnic T.O.P.'S courses, and other training services. In some trades courses there were no women at all. There appeared to be fewer women training in non-traditional work areas in government sponsored training programmes such as T.O.P.'s courses than at the Christchurch Polytechnic. There were no longer any women only pre-trade training courses. Most information advertising courses was gender neutral, but rarely gender inclusive (that is, featuring women in the trades). Judging by the representation of women among course participants, it could be argued that gender neutral material does not encourage women into trades. A short survey of employment agencies revealed that there was a definite need for more skilled people in the



construction, electrical, electronic and engineering trades and industries. Industry leaders were calling for fast-track measures to train more people, but employment agencies said they got very few women registering for non-traditional work especially in the trades (Moreland, 1994). This would suggest that broadening women's work choices is a long, slow and complex process.

Femco had begun the labour pool in 1988, focusing on non-traditional work, at a time when issues of equality in the workforce were being strenuously fought for in the public sector and when women's expectations had been raised by the establishment of the Ministry of Women's Affairs. The broadening of women's work options was seen as an integral part of the Labour Department's strategy for the advancement of equal opportunities. Women's advisory positions within the department highlighted this aspect of their work by promoting new programmes and producing new publications. The ability of Femco to take advantage of subsidised employment and use the positive action programmes in non-traditional work for training and recruitment was further enhanced by the fact that some of the women on the Board worked in these government funded positions. For the government, however, restructuring of the economy and in particular the public sector, was in line with new right economic theory and practice. It meant a shift from large scale work schemes and positive action programmes to assist equity, to individual responsibility, 'choice and flexibility'. This ideological position took no account of the relative abilities of men and women to exercise this choice. It also posed a philosophical dilemma for Femco.

*If we are going to support women into employment we have to work in different ways. We can't set up co-operatives that will compete commercially so we have to get women with the skills, perhaps with our support. I think the support is what we have to do now, encouraging women to stand on their own two feet to compete, in today's environment because they have to compete to live. Women have to change to fit in. Women like working in groups. We have to change our way of thinking. But why should we, if you're idealistic why should you?*

(Long standing Board member)

Femco responded to the changing environment by attempting to run the labour pool within the commercial sector, becoming more 'business like' and diversifying its activities into business

advisory services. A more liberal feminist orientation to change based on individualistic enterprise and the development of the entrepreneurial activities replaced the initial radical feminist vision of Femco. This reorientation saw Femco entering into larger scale contracting activities, and diversifying into the traditionally female industry of cleaning. The venture into cleaning involved, ironically, not the provision of non-traditional work, but the consolidation of a traditional division of labour. Femco rationalised its involvement however, by encouraging the cleaning team to become self-employed contractors and thereby participate in the enterprise culture being promoted by government policy. In effect the organisation was attempting to redefine for itself and its clients what constituted independence and control with respect to paid work. This issue is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

Femco's attempt to address the issue of job segregation and women's need for flexibility in a competitive, private sector market has been characterised by compromise. The under-estimation of the level of skill required and the amount of unskilled work available in some male-dominated trades, caused serious financial losses. Femco's experience shows the limited application of feminist theories relating to gendered definition of skill. While it may be true that relative to male-dominated trades, female-dominated trades such as hairdressing are seen to be less skilled, the relative skill *between* women as experienced by Femco and the skill demanded by *the job*, had to be addressed. Femco could not operate in the private sector unless it had access to skill and experience in the fields in which the organisation obtained contracts. This did not always fit easily with attempts to extend women's skills in manual work through offering them opportunities for work in traditionally 'male' jobs. Similarly, the degree of flexibility needed by women working for Femco could not be addressed in the way it had been for men in gangs. Women were often unable to exercise any *choice* in undertaking family responsibilities. As Edwards has noted:

*...problems arise because of men's 'independence' and because public policies presume that the status of adult citizen is predicated on independence. Women's relationship with the market and the state is, however, much more ambiguous and much more complex.*

*They come both as individuals and as bearers of responsibilities for the care of dependent others. A full and reconstructed understanding of social citizenship for both men and women will need to be based on resolving this duality* (Edwards and Magarey, 1995: 59).

By 1993 in its effort to provide work in non-traditional occupations Femco had compromised on its original principles of 'women's place' and 'women's worth.'

## CHAPTER 4

### THE ENTERPRISE CONNECTION: WOMEN'S ENTERPRISE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

*Women's true freedom and potential will only be realised with the achievement of women's economic independence.* (Women's Enterprise Connection, Victorian Women's Trust, Melbourne Australia, 1993).

sFemco is committed to the principle of economic independence for women. In this chapter Femco's diversification into business advisory services and large scale commercial contracting are explored. I argue that the agency's involvement in these activities posed serious threats to its continued existence and caused conflicts and tensions, some of which arose from the different values of the major stakeholders. The influence of changing government policies and the radical restructuring of the New Zealand economy which determined much of Femco's direction is discussed in the context of the development of women's entrepreneurial activity. Within the organisation this direction proved contradictory as the Board struggled to advocate for the original client group while operating in a commercial environment. The move towards more conventional small business practices as opposed to community development processes highlights Femco's, and some of its women client's, difficulty in competing within an area that is male-dominated and male-defined. Femco's response to demands from both the 'commercial' client and the 'user' client at times caused conflicting messages to be delivered and posed a challenge to the objectives of the agency overall. Financial independence became an elusive goal for both the organisation and its clients as the pressures of commercial reality, government restructuring and women's needs came into collision. I argue that this collision, fuelled by financial crisis, created the environment which forced the organisation to undertake its own restructuring and restate its purpose and values.

One way of achieving economic independence is through 'enterprising' activity. In the context of this work, women's enterprise is defined as income generating projects other than those which are paid for in the form of salaries and wages. This includes self-employment and co-operatives, group projects, or independent ventures which may add to a benefit or partner's income, or act as income substitution e.g. green dollar exchanges. A woman in self-employment is defined in the N.A.C.E.W. study *Te Wahine Hanga Mahi - Women in Self-Employment* as 'a woman who considers herself self-employed and takes an active role in decision-making, risk-taking and day-to-day management in a business in which she has equal or majority ownership' (N.A.C.E.W., 1993:2).

Femco attempted to act in an enterprising manner by entering new markets, diversifying its activities and enlarging its overall operations. The organisation also encouraged enterprising activity among its client group and attempted to enable some women to achieve economic independence by taking control of their own working situation. Femco made no distinction between those women who chose this route independently and those women who had few options for other work, given rising unemployment and their position within the labour market. I argue that it was increasing diversity in the client group and the relative power of different sets of women clients within the organisation which channelled Femco's activities in a particular direction, especially in the period from 1992-4. Similarly, Femco's attempts to grow as an organisation saw it move into areas which made it difficult to maintain its original focus. Further conflicts arose from the demands on the organisation from the differing needs and aspirations of the women registered with the labour pool and self-employed women using the business advisory service.

Femco's experience allows a detailed analysis of how the shifts in government policy influenced the style and management of the organisation and the services delivered. I argue that it is this conjunction of government policy, competing demands from client groups and the original organisational style of Femco which shaped the actions taken. No one factor determined the direction of Femco as an organisation although each at different times was more significant than others. By locating Femco within a social and economic context I analyse how government policy, women clients and organisational style interacted and

consider the relevance of this case study for the analysis of feminist organisations in New Zealand.

## 2. AN ENTREPRENEURIAL ECONOMY

Throughout the developed world, the shift in industrial employment from agriculture, mining and manufacturing to the service sector, has been associated with the evolution of an 'entrepreneurial' economy (Welsh, 1988) characterised by the concentration of capital in a few large firms and the rise of small firms undertaking niche contracting work. This trend has been evident in New Zealand, particularly over the last 10 years, where there has been a dramatic increase in small business activity (Devlin, 1984; Dwyer, Rose, and Sowman, 1985; Bollard, 1988; Callister, 1989; Haines, 1991; Ministry of Women's Affairs, 1991).<sup>1</sup> Self-employment increased by 41% in the five years 1981-86, while total employment grew by only 7%. Since 1986 the trend has continued. In March 1990, 19.3% of the actively employed were self-employed, up from 16.2% in March 1986. The number of very small enterprises (less than five employees) increased by over 18% between 1987 and 1990 (Haines, 1991). This increase in small business activity has been attributed to structural change in the economy, including the tendency to contract out business services, and factors such as technological change which has encouraged the growth of specialised, small-scale enterprises. The recession of the mid to late 1980's added a further impetus as people began businesses in response to unemployment or redundancy (Haines, 1991: 7-11).

The growth and contribution of the small-business sector in the New Zealand economy has been identified as important in economic and social terms in a number of studies (Devlin, 1977; 1984 ; Bollard, 1988; Callister, 1989; Ministry of Women's Affairs, 1991; Haines, 1991; N.A.C.E.W., 1993). The studies have focused on the way small business can meet demands for goods and services that cannot be met through mass production in larger firms. Research has indicated that the growth in self-employment and small business activity occurred during the economic recession of the 1980's, but has been concentrated in areas least

---

<sup>1</sup> In most of the literature small businesses are defined as those enterprises which employ fewer than 50 in the manufacturing sector, 25 in the wholesale and retail sector, 10 in the service sector and 20 in other sectors. Haines's study focusses on the very small enterprises employing 5 or fewer and including those working alone (Haines, 1991).

affected by the recession, such as Auckland and Wellington and in the service sector (Haines, 1991: 47).

Growth for women has occurred in the retail and service sectors (N.A.C.E.W., 1993: 6). In a paper prepared for the Ministry of Women's Affairs in 1991 it is noted that:

*The contribution of the small firm sector also centres on the somewhat elusive, but critical, skills of entrepreneurship - the development of new ideas and products, the identification and filling of gaps in the market and the shifting of production into profitable areas. Larger firms usually prove to be less flexible in this kind of performance than a small entrepreneur* (Ministry of Women's Affairs, 1991: 17).

The entrepreneurial spirit has been more recently defined by Nick Nobilo, Chief Executive of Nobilo Vintners as being about vision:

*It is important to look ahead while constantly building on past experience. It's like climbing a mountain,; getting to the top needs the skills and preparation but there will be storms and blizzards on the way. You have to make a mental commitment to survive and achieve the goals* (McManus, 1995: 30).

## 2.1 Women Business Owners

Studies on women business owners suggest many have an entrepreneurial spirit. (Resources for Women Inc, 1979; Welsh, 1988; Still, 1990; Simpson, Samson and Raumati, 1991). Within the small business sector women-owned enterprises are the fastest growing segment both in New Zealand and throughout the developed world. In the United States the Small Business Administration counts about five million women-owned business, and predicts women will own nearly 40% of small businesses by the year 2000. The number of British self-employed women more than doubled between 1980 and 1990, to 787,000. In 1980 they made up 19% of the self employed; in 1990, 24% (Aburdene and Naisbitt, 1993: 32). In Finland and Sweden, over 25% of all owner-managers are women and in Germany almost 40% of new businesses are initiated by women (N.A.C.E.W., 1993: 2).

In New Zealand, between 1981 and 1991 the numbers of self-employed women rose by 80% compared with an increase of just 7% in the female labour force. The numbers of self-employed Maori women more than doubled over the decade to 1991 while the number of employed Maori women grew by 5%. However, despite this increase, Maori women are still under-represented among the self-employed making up only 4% of all self-employed women in 1991 compared with 8% of all employed women. According to the 1991 Census, 70,572 women are self-employed and/or employing others. This is 12% of women in the employed labour force and 26 % of the self-employed labour force. Although the level of self-employment in the Maori population is lower these gender differences are replicated (Statistics New Zealand, 1993: 95).

Women business owners are beginning to hold an increasingly important position in the New Zealand economy, although it should be noted here that, as in the labour force as a whole, women are more likely than men to be part-time workers. Thirty-four percent of self-employed women worked part-time in 1991, compared with 9% of self-employed men (Statistics New Zealand, 1993: 95). It can be assumed that issues relating to part-time work for women in the waged labour force will also be relevant to women in self-employment. The reasons for the high proportion of women working part-time in their businesses has not been well documented, but a New Zealand study on part-time work suggests that many women participate in part-time work because of household responsibilities (Davidson and Bray, 1994). It may be seen that self-employment gives more flexibility in this regard, and indeed is often cited as a reason for self-employment among women (Tepper and Tepper, 1980; N.A.C.E.W., 1993; Gray, 1993). The result is, however, usually lower income and less viability of the enterprise as a tool for economic independence (N.A.C.E.W., 1993).

## **2.2. Femco and The Informal Economy**

Informal activity (including the 'black economy', barter and self-sufficiency) has also been identified as playing a role in the small-business sector. Given the nature of most of this activity however, it is difficult to document accurately, although at least one report suggests that the contribution of the small business sector in the formal sector is enhanced by the contribution made through the informal sector. It is further suggested that this sector may



produce greater numbers of entrepreneurs and innovators given the sometimes illegal environment in which they must operate (Ministry of Women's Affairs, 1991).

Femco certainly operated in this environment with many of the women initially employed through the labour pool working only the number of hours allowable before benefit abatement. While this is a legitimate activity and one which many women, given their family circumstances, may find is the only way they can engage in paid work, running an organisation with large numbers of workers in this situation can be problematic. For Femco, it created problems when the organisation attempted to be financially viable and independent. To compete in the private sector successfully and be less dependent on government funding, a stable workforce was required and overheads needed to be reduced to a minimum.

*Femco attracted young lesbian women to work for it and a lot of those young dykes were really interested in doing alternative work. They were the women who wanted to do the gardening and the painting, but they were also the women - many of them - who wanted (or needed) to remain on a benefit. They were the ones we had difficulty with.*

(Original Board Member)

The difficulties arose because at times these women were less committed to working for Femco and often could not be relied on to complete the job. The Board member believed this was due to the availability of other forms of income. On the other hand, in the early stages of the labour pool Femco could not guarantee a certain number of hours or offer any job security. This meant the organisation's claim on the worker's loyalty or commitment was at best rather tenuous.

### 3. POLICY ENVIRONMENT

The rise in small business activity has in part been a response to the move within New Zealand to a more market driven economy. This move was informed substantially by monetarist policies aimed at reducing the rate of inflation and involving considerable restructuring of the state sector. This restructuring produced a drive to encourage enterprise, entrepreneurial spirit and an enterprising culture (Jesson, 1987; Boston and Holland, 1987; Boston and Dalziel, 1992; Else, 1992; Kelsey, 1993). This has been encouraged by successive governments

whose enterprise packages have sought to develop small entrepreneurial businesses and to see self-employment as an alternative to unemployment. Programmes such as the New Zealand Employment Service's Enterprise Allowance which provides a wage subsidy to unemployed people setting up business, the Community Employment Group's, Be Your Own Boss Programme, which provides free business skills training to those setting up businesses and the Business Development Board's Programme of Assistance to those investigating and expanding businesses have focused on new business start-ups and the development of new products and services. The language of government assistance has shifted from the 'work, employment, co-operative, group scheme' labels of the early 1980's to 'individual, enterprise, entrepreneur, development', encouraging the market philosophy throughout the community.<sup>2</sup> In 1991 the government spent about \$190 million on direct assistance to enterprise. Of this sum approximately 70% was directed generally towards any new (including encouraging start-ups) or existing business. A further 20% was more narrowly targeted towards individuals and groups disadvantaged in the labour market and a small percentage (about 8%) was targeted towards innovative businesses. In addition, general economic policies have focused on the promotion of an environment conducive to business growth (Haines, 1991: 42-47).

Femco, with its focus on delivering services which would encourage women's economic independence, was ideologically well placed to take advantage of the shift in government policies and programmes. Employment Resource Centres, in 1989, after a long collective struggle, had obtained three year organisational funding to provide business advisory services, skills workshops and enterprise training, under the new Local Enterprise Employment Development Scheme (L.E.E.D.S.), Femco adapted its focus to become a Resource Centre for women, to deliver business advisory services and to run skills workshops on a variety of topics which would move women from the labour pool into more permanent work or self-employment.

---

<sup>2</sup> See New Zealand Employment Service Programme, Business Development Board Programme, Community Employment Group Programme (Statistics New Zealand, 1995). For a discussion of programmes prior to 1986 see (Department of Internal Affairs, 1991). The importance and potency of language shifts is also discussed in the Australian context by Pocock (1995: 125).

*One of our aims was to get the labour pool teams into self-employment. We felt that these businesses weren't succeeding because they didn't have the business skills and if we had a person who could provide those skills, we could provide that service.*

(Long standing Board Member)

*What happened was that there was a new kind of funding evolving that would provide a co-ordinator's wage which would enable the agency to deliver that service. There was quite a lot of talking about whether that was what was wanted or not and what was expected. It didn't seem that the group would have to change too much or let go too many of the other objectives. I think they saw themselves splitting into two parts - one the labour pool and the other business advisory. So you had an agency that was providing supportive employment for part-time, casual, labour and part of the organisation was providing training and advice and support for independent business women.*

(Field Worker)

Femco was successful in its application for the funding, and with the security of funding for the next three years began building an organisation which could provide for a variety of aspects of women's employment. Initially the L.E.E.D.S. funding was used to continue the existing services and to gradually provide individual business advisory work. The three-year guarantee of the L.E.E.D.S. funding, in line with government policy at the time, was intended as development funding, at the end of which the agencies were to be self-sufficient. Those lobbying for the scheme at the time of its development accepted this condition reluctantly, assuming the conditions would be re-negotiated at the end of the first three-year period.<sup>3</sup> The election of the National government in 1990 halted the negotiations and as the policies of enterprise development moved further in line with the monetarist economic policies and enterprise funding was rationalised accordingly.<sup>4</sup>

#### 4. COMMUNITY ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

<sup>3</sup> Community Employment Resource Centre Association minutes, 1988.

<sup>4</sup> Enterprise assistance since 1991 has been delivered primarily by the Department of Labour and Ministry of Commerce with small programmes run by the Ministry of Women's Affairs, (Wahine Pakari - business skills training for Maori women) Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, (Pacific Island Employment Development Scheme - to assist Pacific Islanders develop skills and establish viable businesses) and Iwi Authorities (Mana scheme - assistance to Maori businesses).

Femco, like many others at the time, pursued a Community Enterprise Development model, in its attempt to move towards economic independence. The model was presented and encouraged by visiting consultant Vivienne Hyman, from Scotland, in 1989. Femco (and other women's organisations) spent considerable time with the consultant and subsequently developed its own community business model, identifying itself as a 'community business'.

*Vivienne Hyman came and put it into a context for us - this was community business, this was what it was about. It was a community development model and it was looking at communities being self-sustaining as opposed to being totally government funded and she really challenged us. It gave us a model to work by.*

(Original Board Member)

'Community Enterprise Development' is a generic term covering a variety of community owned and controlled trading and non-trading activities that address local needs. One of the characteristics of community enterprises is that any profits from trading activities are distributed to the wider community rather than to individual members of the enterprise. Literature on Community Enterprise Development suggests that community businesses are essentially small businesses set up with the specific aim of job creation for unemployed people, particularly those long-term unemployed. They provide a mechanism for depressed communities to take advantage of business opportunities as they arise (e.g. taking over an existing enterprise which is about to be closed down) and they typically develop projects of social benefit (e.g. training, support, transport). They also provide a mechanism for government to target assistance to poor and disadvantaged communities with a degree of certainty that the target population will benefit.

There are, however, constraints on the success of community businesses in that they invariably work with groups who have a low skill level, are often under-capitalised and competing with businesses with greater resources and have an over-dependency on key individuals (Donovan, 1993). These constraints were to become a feature of the Femco's development and will be discussed later in this chapter in the context of Femco's diversification into business advisory services and the gaining of large scale contracts by the labour pool.

## 5. FEMCO AND WOMEN IN SMALL BUSINESS

Femco was operating in an economic environment which was undergoing rapid change and in which major shifts in employment patterns were occurring. As the manufacturing sector lost its dominance, the service economy provided the major outlet for business. Women in New Zealand and elsewhere took advantage of this increasing demand for commercial services to establish greater numbers of their own enterprises within the service sector.

The literature on women in small business indicates that women's enterprises are begun on a very small scale and self-employed women are likely to earn less than self-employed men (Ministry of Women's Affairs, 1991; N.A.C.E.W., 1993). Women's socialisation and the socialisation of those making the decisions about access to finance and other business services are cited as reasons for both the smaller scale and lower participation rate than men (Goffee and Scase, 1985; Ministry of Women's Affairs, 1989; 1990a; 1991; 1993a; MacDiarmid and Thomson, 1991; Gray, 1993; N.A.C.E.W., 1993). One Australian study noted that women's enterprises were often not taken seriously and their skills discounted because they had been developed within the family or community sector (MacDiarmid and Thomson, 1991). A New Zealand study also commented on the prevalence of unpaid and underpaid work undertaken by women as a barrier to the development of small business activity (Boswell, Brown, Maniapoto, Kruger, 1994: 92-93). The Statistical overview in the N.A.C.E.W. study shows that as a group, women in self-employment are quite distinct from both self-employed men and female wage and salary earners in terms of qualifications, income, industry and occupational groupings (N.A.C.E.W., 1993).

Femco attempted to deliver to both wage and salary earners and self-employed women and to all ethnic groups. Different strategies, personnel and resources were needed to provide adequately for each group of women. However, the speed with which the move into the business advisory service occurred meant that insufficient time was given to addressing these issues. It was only when serious conflict arose between the two groups that the Board of Femco intervened. This situation is discussed further in Chapter 5.

The 1980's and 1990's have seen a series of studies focusing on women's career patterns, financial independence and strategies for survival in the male domains of business and

management. The focus has been on the individual 'being enterprising' and taking advantage of the entrepreneurial economy produced by free-market policies (Goffee and Scase, 1985; Bowen and Hisrich, 1986; Hisrich and Brush, 1987; Welsh, 1988; Carter and Cannon, 1988; Still, 1990; Moore, 1990; Lee-Gosselin and Grise, 1990; Martin, Pere, Cameron and Lowe, 1992). Most of the studies show that women entrepreneurs reflect liberal feminist strategies of reforming the state and business environment to facilitate women's entry, rather than attempting alternative practices. However, the studies also suggest that women see themselves as acting differently to men in the business environment (Welsh, 1988; Still, 1990).

Given that most women's enterprises are small and employ only the owner, whose main purpose is to generate her own income, it is not surprising that alternative practices are not part of the businesswoman's agenda. She is often concerned with survival, and faced with a number of barriers to advancement, not able to reach a financially secure position which would allow experimentation and the development of a 'women's economy'. An American study on the success of small business in that country argued that women's businesses did not provide a way to escape inequality, but rather they offered women 'peripheral economic niches' and that women were responding to a 'surfeit of opportunities in areas deemed appropriate for them.' The study further claimed that women carried their disadvantaged position in the labour market with them into the small business sphere (Loscocco and Robinson, 1991: 527).

Those businesses which do identify as feminist businesses have also identified the difficulties of working within a capitalist framework and have been challenged as to the extent to which it is possible to initiate alternative business processes in this environment (Woodul, 1978). Femco attempted alternative ways of working and to incorporate women's lifestyle needs into its business practice. It was the difficulty of carrying out the ideological stance when involved in service delivery which eventually led to a close examination of what is possible when working within the established economic framework. From the beginning of service delivery in the private sector the issues of theory and practice were keenly debated. Two opposing arguments have been prevalent throughout Femco's history, with regards to what length it was possible to go to in terms of 'being different'.

*I think it's totally unrealistic- you're asking 90% of the population to change its entire work habits developed over centuries, for what I think is a very small number of people. It seemed like a good idea at the time. I felt the reality a lot more than the Board because I was actually having to talk to the customers. I was on the end of the phone and sometimes it was not a pleasant place to be.*

(Early Co-ordinator)

*I see it very strongly as to help women. That's why we had to say very firmly, no, when someone wanted to employ a male. I believe that if there's no female to do the job, well the job can't be done because you defeat the whole purpose. We were set up to help women.*

(Long standing Board Member)

The resolution of these points of view varied at different times in Femco's history. Sometimes the Board member's position held while at others the pragmatism of the co-ordinators and the need to 'get the job done' involved compromises.

Studies on women in business also indicate that, despite the growth in business activity, in New Zealand and most communities throughout the world, women business-owners operate with little or no support from the mainstream business, economic development and financial communities. One of the major barriers women report in the enterprise formation process 'is not being taken seriously' (Carter and Cannon, 1988; Gray, 1993). An Australian study typifies much of the research:

*Women report that their business activities are often seen as 'hobbies' or they are not seen as good candidates for successful business operation. These stereotypes are often compounded for women who are disadvantaged, Koori or have a Non English speaking background. These attitudes spill over into the community at large generally creating an unsupportive environment for enterprising women* (MacDiarmid and Thomson, 1991: 11).

Documented women's experience of the Government's, Business Development Board's, Enterprise Assistance Programme in New Zealand would appear to uphold this view.

*Of the 1,001 grants (totalling \$3,251, 453) approved under the Business Development Board Programme from 1 July 1992 to 30 March 1993 only 38 were to women (3.7 %). Val Lloyd noted in a speech to the Think Export Conference for New Zealand Women in Business in 1993 that the numbers of women receiving grants under the scheme was low, just 3.8 % overall, commenting that: For the Auckland Board, the majority of grants that we have given to people since the Board began have been in the manufacturing category, in the New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (NZSCIS) sector 38, manufacture of fabricated metal products, machinery and equipment which has received 78% of all grants. The majority of women - in fact I don't know of any - would not fall into this category (Lloyd, 1993b).*

## 6. ENTERPRISE ASSISTANCE

The distribution of the employed population is largely repeated among the self-employed, with women being concentrated in the retail and service sectors. This may explain to some degree the low numbers of women receiving Government loan assistance as the criteria favour the male business characteristics of larger scale enterprises in the manufacturing sector. The assistance also favours the traditional model of successful entrepreneurial activity which assumes growth and striving towards continuing expansion. The studies on women and self-employment suggest that when women look at entrepreneurial activity it involves a much broader range of responsibilities than the pursuit of profit and growth. These responsibilities include care for the environment, children and the family and the pursuit of a better quality of life, as well as making money. A report on Maori women in business in 1991 noted that Maori women chose to go into business because it gave them independence, flexibility, recognition and satisfaction (Simpson and Raumati, 1991).

In a small New Zealand study by Alison Gray looking at business assistance for women from the Business Development Board, one of the greatest barriers for the women in the study was the lack of capital and access to capital. Women in the study also suffered from a lack of information and knowledge about government assistance. The study also noted that the women who had dealings with TRADENZ found it unsympathetic to small business and not



well geared to their needs. Some women then chose to act independently, others tried alternative avenues for help.

The study concluded that Government assistance in the areas of capital for small ventures and a greater knowledge and awareness of the needs of very small businesses, may be more useful to women than the categories currently being pursued by the Business Development Boards which tend to favour male-oriented models of business development (Gray, 1993). A report on enterprise assistance and Maori women, noted that most of the enterprise assistance available is either inaccessible or inappropriate for the needs of Maori women in business or those wishing to enter business (Ministry of Women's Affairs, Te Ohu Whakatupu, 1993a).

In the N.A.C.E.W. study on women and self-employment, none of the women in the study had approached the Business Development Boards for advice or funding (N.A.C.E.W., 1993). Locating information was also a problem for Maori women wishing to establish a business. Sources of advice and finance were seen to be crucial to the establishment of the businesses by Maori women and it was noted that Maori businesswomen have the motivation and the ideas necessary for business but do not have the experience or skills necessary to ensure the smooth establishment and organisation of the business (Simpson and Raumati, 1991).

## **7. FEMCO, MAORI WOMEN AND BUSINESS**

Maori women have also been affected by the recent profound economic and social change and according to Te Ohu Whakatupu, over the last five years, they have been setting up businesses faster than any other comparable group (Te Ohu Whakatupu, Ministry of Women's Affairs, 1992: 38). This emerging trend can be seen as part of a Maori economic and cultural renaissance as well as a response to economic necessity. Te Ohu Whakatupu developed a range of strategies to address the specific barriers Maori women face when entering the business world.

The barriers were identified as:

- the prevalence of racist and sexist attitudes in society.
- the lack of access to adequate finance for Maori women's businesses.
- the lack of access to information and advice on business finance and good business practice.

- the inadequate business management skills of many Maori women.
- the failure, due to social conditioning and a lack of role models, of Maori to perceive themselves as successful business people.

The strategies included entrepreneurial and business skills training packages, research and development of guidelines for Maori women to assist with applying for loans, videos and booklets featuring Maori women role models, a directory of Maori women in business, and policy advice to government through Te Ohu Whakatupu (Te Ohu Whakatupu, Ministry of Women's Affairs, 1992: 2-4).

According to Bev Adlam, recently appointed manager of services and marketing for the Department of Internal Affairs:

*Maori women are developing more confidence in their abilities and recognising that some of the experiences they have gained in community affairs - on marae committees or school boards - are the same skills needed for managing a business* (Te Ohu Whakatupu, Ministry of Women's Affairs, 1992: 39).

Maori women in business face a double discrimination in terms of being women and being Maori. Statistics suggest that ethnicity has more impact than gender on participation levels (Tahi and Meha, 1991).

Despite this increase in Maori women seeking self-employment and more economic independence, Femco did not attract large numbers of Maori women to its services. From the beginning, when the first worker was a Maori woman, Femco has had Maori women represented on the Board, or as workers, apart from a brief period between 1992 and 1993. Maori women have attended the Be Your Own Boss courses, Women In Self Employment network meetings and have been registered with the labour pool, but their influence within the organisation has been small and the issue of the double discrimination faced by Maori women has not been openly discussed. This in part reflects the make up of Femco's founders and its subsequent focus, but also demonstrates the difficulty faced by a predominantly Pakeha organisation which, although attempting inclusiveness, presents an image which is not reflective of other groups. More recently Femco has been more successful in building

alliances and partnerships with a Maori women's organisation to share in the service provision to both groups. The establishment of a Maori women's organisation to address the issue of employment and business development has shown that when this group has its own organisation the clients come in increasing numbers.<sup>5</sup> Femco's experience would suggest that alliances, joint ventures and sharing of resources is the best way to ensure service delivery across cultural lines. As yet very little has been developed with Pacific Island women. This is an area requiring future research and development.

### 7.1 Specific Women's Programmes

In a review of the Job Opportunity Scheme's Self-Employment Option (J.O.S.), (the forerunner of the Enterprise Allowance) in 1990, Janine Keller noted that:

*...the proportion of women who had been involved in the J.O.S. self-employment programme was found to be smaller than that of men. Fifty-four (18.3% of the total clients) had been involved in the self-employed programme, 35 had completed the programme, and of those, 26 (74.2% of the women involved) had not reappeared on the unemployment register (Keller, 1990: 15).*

This may suggest that programmes more specifically targeted to the needs of women should be developed.

Some agencies do run specific women's courses funded under the Enterprise Training scheme or from the Community Employment Group's project fund. Seminars and conferences funded by the Community Employment Group have been run throughout the country, and Women in Self-Employment networks (W.I.S.E.) are available in many centres. These programmes are however, small in scale and few in number.<sup>6</sup> In response to these barriers and inequalities, some women's organisations have developed their own mechanisms for enterprise assistance and the development of entrepreneurial activity.

---

<sup>5</sup> Wahine Tu Kaha operates from the Small Business Enterprise Centre in Christchurch and has seen over 50 clients in its first six months of operation (MacGibbon, 1995).

<sup>6</sup> Femco ran a Be Your Own Boss programme for women in 1991 for 45 participants, and some agencies have run courses as one component of a larger programme, e.g. The Capital Development Agency in Wellington.

Members of the Maori Women's Welfare League pushed for a special women's fund for business development because the bulk of the development funds available to Maori business in the early 1980's was going to male run enterprises. Of an initial \$15 million made available for Maori loans, just \$90,000 went to women, yet lack of finance remains one of their major barriers to business entry (Te Ohu Whakatupu, Ministry of Women's Affairs, 1992: 40-41). The Maori Women's Development Fund was therefore established in 1986 with a grant of \$240,000 from the Mana Enterprise Scheme to be administered by the Maori Women's Welfare League. The fund is seen as the economic arm of the Maori Women's Welfare League for all Maori women to develop and establish enterprises. At a seminar for Maori women in business 'Maori Women Mean Business' in December 1989, Georgina Kirby described the fund as:

*... an attempt to provide Maori women with equal access and opportunity related to earning money, the ability to use money to make money, access to credit, sources of credit, sources of financing, borrowing money, lending and underwriting* (Ministry of Women's Affairs, Te Ohu Whakatupu, 1989).

Another fund set up to assist women in business is the Azure Fund which is a loan guarantee fund for women established under Women in Enterprise Inc. Women in Enterprise was set up in 1990 after a national employment forum, by women in Christchurch who were frustrated with male dominance in the employment field. Women in Enterprise has as its main aim the economic independence of women and set up the Azure Fund with a grant from the Department of Internal affairs. The fund is seen as a way to assist women to establish or develop businesses when they had been turned down by a bank for a loan, due to lack of security. The fund has \$20,000 and guarantees range from \$5,000 to \$10,000.<sup>7</sup>

## 8. FEMCO AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Many women and men set up businesses with little formal advice or professional help. Most women in the N.A.C.E.W. study were sole traders and most drew little or no income from the business, preferring to re-invest in plant and stock or being committed to expenses for staff or materials. Very few women in the study were in business primarily for the money, although

---

<sup>7</sup> Women in Enterprise constitution and minutes, 1990-94.

the business was the primary source of income for half the 48 women interviewed (N.A.C.E.W., 1993). This finding is echoed by a small American study on Women and Home-Working which stated:

*Making a lot of money was not the most important goal for many of them. Still, it was important to make enough money to be able to afford the business. If I wanted to make money I wouldn't be doing this. I'd be doing something else. But it is important for me to make enough money doing this that I can do it* (Tepper and Tepper, 1980: 15).

In the N.A.C.E.W. study women were much more likely than men to say they were in business because they enjoyed the independence and the freedom of working for themselves. They also liked the challenge of establishing something new, the ability to use and expand on their knowledge and skills and, in some cases, to be able to fit their work around family and community commitments. Despite their long hours of work and the demands of running a business, women were generally very enthusiastic about their quality of life.

The N.A.C.E.W. report concludes that:

*Women are making a growing contribution to business development in New Zealand. Attention to their particular needs by service providers, Government and others would be beneficial both to these women and to the wider economy. Women are innovative and resourceful. Their enterprise is too important to ignore* (N.A.C.E.W., 1993: 64).

The growth in women's enterprise, in the form of self-employment may be seen as a reflection of changes in both women and society and as some women's' response to their economic and professional needs.

Femco, as a growing and dynamic organisation, responded to these changes and needs by utilising available government funding to establish business advisory services and consolidate the work of the labour pool. The L.E.E.D.S. funding provided \$50,000 per year for three years, available in three equal amounts or in splits of \$75,000, \$50,000, \$25,000. Femco opted for the latter in a recognition of the set up costs of the new service. The L.E.E.D.S. funding

obscured the real financial situation of Femco because it was used to offset losses in the labour pool before the business advisory service required the full funding.

The acquisition of the L.E.E.D.S. funding caused a shift in Femco's functioning, particularly when the government required a greater degree of accountability and higher standard of service delivery.

*There was so much money - with the L.E.E.D.S. grant - there was a lot of money being talked about - I felt it was a bit scary all that money coming in. Well, you know we've got to cough up now. We're saying we're going to provide all this stuff. Well we've actually got to do it, where as when we were a tin pot outfit (it didn't matter so much). It was a lot of responsibility.*

(Early Co-ordinator)

Femco was therefore, because of this security of funding, and the retention of women as a 'disadvantaged' group with regards to employment assistance, to a certain extent protected from the initial government restructuring and the cessation of fully funded work schemes. It was not until the early 1990's that these effects were really felt by the organisation. It was at this time that Femco itself began facing the contradictions posed by the new political and economic environment. Femco had attempted to diversify its clientele from small-scale individual contracts, often with supporters of the organisation's goals, to larger commercial contracts. The move was motivated by the need to grow in order to provide more work for women, (as there had always been more women seeking work than work available through the organisation) and to satisfy funders who were demanding results in the form of throughput numbers. It was also a response to the organisation's desire to become more independent. Femco saw larger contracts as generating profit which could then be used for the social objectives of the organisation.

A major constraint was the tension between the interests of the women seeking work and the interests of the people providing the work. If the women seeking work were the major client for Femco, then their skills, abilities and needs with regard to flexibility would determine the jobs undertaken. If the client providing the work was the major consideration, then the skills required to do the work and the desired margin for the contract were the determinants. The

two did not always match. On the surface, the better Femco served the client who was dealing with the organisation as a contractor, the more they were able to serve the client who approached the organisation as an employer or work provider. The realities of working with unskilled or underskilled workers, however, meant that there were considerations other than cost efficiency. The women available for work were often unable to fulfil the demands of clients providing work in a way which would allow the organisation to make a profit.

*I was definitely into the idea of us making money and I think as an organisation we definitely were. I think there were a few things holding us back and to me the biggest thing was the whole duality about who's our primary client? And as soon as we started acting as contractors we set ourselves up in a difficult position by doing that. I think it was the right thing to do and I think we did some amazing stuff, but we were putting ourselves in the position where we were trying to walk a fence all the time which probably wasn't conducive to making money.*

(Early Co-ordinator)

## 8.1 The Labour Pool

Femco was successful in gaining a large lawn mowing contract with the Christchurch City Council and some commercial painting jobs. This need to compete in the commercial arena produced a challenge to the original goals of the organisation, as in order to become more competitive and gain contracts, particularly in the gardening and painting areas, the organisation employed trained supervisors. While this certainly increased the quality of work performed by Femco, it also increased costs and in turn prevented the employment of women who wanted to learn new skills in these areas. The demands of large commercial contracts also prevented the organisation from providing part-time, casual or flexible work - the very reason Femco was originally set up.

*The vision was there, but we knew that to become viable we really had to think about what we are doing and get more focused on the commercial world because the idealised and consensus way didn't work and we can't get women into work if we are going to do that.*

(Long standing Board Member)

Further discussion on how these decisions were made and the effect on the organisation is contained in Chapter 5.

The issue of making money, which in a capitalist economy is the main purpose of business, was problematic for Femco given its charitable status and its stated aims and objectives.

*I feel that we are not in the business of making profit, but we are not in the process of making a loss either and that's a hard thing. The fact that we're a charitable organisation. For a start our philosophy isn't into making money. We have to cover expenses and if at the end of a year we come out with some in hand then that's probably good business practice to put some aside in good days for bad days. But if we started making a lot of money and piling it up in the bank I think we'd have to question very seriously what we were up to, it's not what we're about.*

(Long standing Board Member)

The staff working with the women on a daily basis were also acutely aware of the conflicts and tensions between commercial reality and the aims of the organisation. One early co-ordinator came to believe that the organisation could not do both the things it was attempting to.

*I don't think the Board truly understood the difference between a community group and the reality of being a business. It couldn't be both. If you wanted to be a business there were some things that weren't very nice, like hiring and firing people which isn't very pleasant. Operating as a business isn't always community minded. You do sometimes have to make compromises between what you pay people and what you want them to do.*

(Early Co-ordinator)

The lawn-mowing contract, which was for eight months of the year, necessitated the purchase of expensive capital equipment, incurred high maintenance costs and additional co-ordination costs. These costs had been underestimated in the original tender and were to prove difficult to recoup. The issue of under-funding was raised by the lawn-mowing team who expressed frustration with a number of issues, in particular the inadequacy of equipment and the lack of a convenient base from which to work. This was particularly a problem when workers had their periods and no toilets were available. The city council contract entailed mowing lawns in a variety of locations, often significant distances apart. Most of the lawns were around the



council's housing estates for elderly people. The team also identified the need for good people skills as residents often liked having women doing the lawns and wanted a chat. This took time and patience. Other residents were less welcoming. The co-ordinator reported to the Board that:

*All their people skills have to be used to deal with these cantankerous residents and the team have been verbally abused and once a worker was pushed over by an irate man. We are indebted to the supervisor's abilities as an initiator and organiser in bringing this team to its current position and chipping away at the problems. She has to juggle the demands of clients, do quotes, organise the team and gear, deal with the broken gear, dump rubbish and grass, do social work, assess new workers, call into the agency every day for messages, write up accounts, monitor time sheets, practise mechanical skills, look after the van, do after hours phone work and call into Femco for dump money. If Femco is intending to tender for contracts in the future, it is important that the funding is there to set up the equipment necessary at the start. It is very difficult working at a high standard with inadequate gear. It is not only making the work really hard to do, it jeopardises Femco's reputation and therefore women and our workers (Femco minutes, September 1993).*

In order to address some of these issues Femco did what government policies and programmes were encouraging them to do - acted like a small business. In September 1993, the labour pool took out a loan of \$30,000 with a local bank to cover operating expenses and to assist with the cash flow problems.

*It was a sound business proposition, even though we were funded by grants, because you cannot grow, which is what we were trying to do, from cash flow. You cannot grow any organisation, regardless of how small or how big from cash flow. You have to have an injection of capital.*

(Board Member)

The loan enabled the continued functioning of the labour pool, but in fact did not address the issue of profitability or efficiency, which were not only about poor equipment. The labour pool was incurring continual losses due to a number of factors, principally the costs of supervision of unskilled and unreliable workers, under quoting and higher than average pay rates. Losses were at times unavoidable, for example, when the weather conditions meant insufficient work

and the voluntary liquidation of a firm with no assets and many creditors, which owed the labour pool \$3,740. The losses of the labour pool were initially covered by the L.E.E.D.S. funding and surpluses from previous years.<sup>8</sup>

A few months after taking out the loan, the manager proposed changes to the labour pool to address the loss situation. These changes suggested stopping competing with the private sector and concentrating on re-training and perhaps targeting hospitals and schools to get work for the labour pool. Given that a number of contracts had months to run, it was difficult for Femco to undertake this kind of restructuring. In addition, conflicts among the workers clouded the issue. The manager was running the business advisory service and it appeared to the labour pool workers that she wanted the organisation to put more emphasis in that area and to curtail the activities of the labour pool.

*I think because she was involved in the business advisory services and she could see it expanding more and more. Meantime, the labour pool just sat in one spot and wasn't going anywhere.*

(Administrator)

The labour pool co-ordinator who had become further and further removed from the manager saw any criticism or project changes as a threat to the labour pool's continued existence. She and the other workers in the labour pool had no access to financial information and so had no understanding of the actual viability of the service.

*When there was a manager, it was like getting blood out of a stone, getting information out of her as to what was going on. It was like, maybe you don't really need to know.*

(Administrator)

A review undertaken by a Board member at this time (1993) noted the internal communication difficulties and lack of knowledge of operational costs by labour pool staff. The review suggested that the staff hold regular meetings and that the labour pool co-ordinator be responsible for budgets and expenditure for that section rather than the manager, although this would be assessed in conjunction with the manager who had the accounting skills. Conflicts

---

<sup>8</sup> The 1991/92 accounts show a surplus of \$58,747. However, this was primarily due to the bulk funding of contracts not yet fulfilled.

of this nature happen frequently in voluntary organisations (Handy, 1988; Butler and Wilson, 1990), often associated with restrictions on funding.

*Conflict can also occur between divisions in the same branch of the organisation, particularly where resources are scarce and demand from all the divisions exceeds supply* (Butler and Wilson, 1990:27).

## 8.2 The Business Advisory Service

Whilst attempting to address the issues arising from the labour pool and maintaining its position of advocacy for women in employment, Femco had also responded to the growing numbers of women seeking self-employment, by providing business training and advisory services. This was a requirement of the L.E.E.D.S. grant and had originally focused on providing services for women registered with the labour pool. However, in the context of the employment by Femco of more business-focused managers and the addition of Board members with the required skills and credibility for the new environment, the business advisory work took on a much greater profile within the organisation. This tendency was extended with the introduction by the government of the Be Your Own Boss package.

The 1990 National government's focus on enterprise saw the review of assistance programmes for unemployed people aimed at self-employment and small business. This included the L.E.E.D.S. programme and its delivery agent the Community Employment Development Unit, both of which had been established under the previous Labour government.<sup>9</sup> The S.C.O.P.E.<sup>10</sup> programme was also reviewed and eventually discontinued. This meant there was no funding to review business plans which had become a growing part of Femco's business. The government replaced the L.E.E.D.S. funding with project, rather than agency funding, and introduced the Be Your Own Boss programme.<sup>11</sup> This programme was allocated

---

<sup>9</sup> The Community Employment Development Unit was set up in 1990 to provide funding and field worker assistance to Resource Centres and community development workers working on community employment projects. It was disestablished after the government's enterprise review in 1991 and replaced by the Community Employment Group which also took over the Group Employment Liaison Scheme, and the Internal Affairs S.C.O.P.E. programme.

<sup>10</sup> S.C.O.P.E. - Small Co-operative Enterprises Scheme - was introduced in the Budget of 1980 to encourage the development of small scale co-operative business ventures for people disadvantaged in the labour market.

<sup>11</sup> The Be Your Own Boss programme is a training programme for non-business wise people who wish to enter self-employment. The package includes a follow up service and a mentoring programme.

on a tender basis and unlike previous programmes was not fully funded. The government funded 70% of the total cost of the programme. This meant organisations had to either find alternative sources of funding for the shortfall (30%) or inflate the tender.

Femco successfully tendered for the programme and the government agency diverted the contracted L.E.E.D.S. funding into the programme. The government department restructuring also reduced the number of field workers available to work with agencies. This shift of government policy and change of funding allocation had a serious effect on Femco. The debate around programme and project funding is fundamental to many voluntary agencies and creates obstacles to long term planning. Programme funding is organisational funding to carry out generic programmes of work; project funding is one-off funding for specific projects with a defined beginning and end. Most voluntary organisations have to source funding from a variety of agencies and the relationship with the funders and their requirements is often crucial to the success of the organisation (Handy, 1988; Butler and Wilson, 1990; Vellekoop-Baldock, 1990; Cull, 1992).

*Future planning is always difficult because of the funding. There isn't any more funding - no extra money coming out (of government) so I can't see us getting any more (the funding agency) but women are a target group so it might get used differently. There is enormous conflict going on all the time between projects and programmes. You hear of people getting locked into programmes and I think it will all come down to projects, then where will people be, I don't know. Yet we've got twenty new organisations registering every week with the incorporated societies according to the Press last week.*

(Field Worker)

A marketing and promotions position created by Femco in 1990 had relied on the L.E.E.D.S. funding, and the organisation had believed the position would generate funding from the private sector for both the labour pool and the business advisory service. This had not happened, largely because in order to increase the chargeable hours for business advisory work, Femco needed to employ the services of a fully qualified accountant. This in turn increased costs and eroded any profit the service might have made. The situation was similar for the labour pool. In order to increase the amount of work from the private sector the labour pool needed to employ more qualified supervisors. Again this resulted in increased costs and

decreased the likelihood of profit. In effect Femco was facing the situation of many small businesses - the difficulty of expansion where there is a lack of capital.<sup>12</sup> It was however, facing this situation as a result of reduced government funding and a policy environment which was pushing voluntary organisations towards more commercial functioning. This policy environment made it difficult for community organisations to function in the public interest. Resources allocated to securing of tenders, sourcing supplementary funding and presenting a more 'professional image' reduced the amount of money available to be allocated to the intended recipients of the organisation's business.

In addition, Femco was required to respond to the greater accountability being called for by the government funding agencies. As Mary Cull notes:

*The pressure on voluntary organisations to be accountable, to present well and to manage scarce resources under public scrutiny is not expected of business organisations* (Cull, 1992: 222).

Ironically Femco was being encouraged to become more 'businesslike'.

The introduction of contestable funding by the Department of Labour, in the form of the B.Y.O.B. programme, introduced new, more commercially focused competitors in the area of enterprise training.<sup>13</sup> The competitive nature and short-term project base of the funding also saw an end to the co-operation which had existed between the various agencies. Many Resource Centres which had provided a variety of services to unemployed people became Enterprise Agencies and promoted self employment as the most viable alternative to unemployment to their clients. The usefulness of this as a major strategy in combating unemployment is questioned by research which shows that few people have come to self-employment from unemployment (N.A.C.E.W., 1993). The advocacy role of Resource Centres diminished, as did the work provision. Training, other than self-employment training, also ceased in most cases.

---

<sup>12</sup> Literature on small business formation quoted in this thesis, consistently cites lack of expansion capital as a barrier to development.

<sup>13</sup> Particularly those closely linked to local authorities, e.g. Wellington Capital Development Agency, Palmerston North Enterprise Board, Hamilton Enterprise Board.

The agencies found themselves in direct competition for the enterprise funding and some even went out of business or had their operations severely curtailed. These changes resulted in a change of clientele for the agencies and the criterion for Enterprise training under the Be Your Own Boss programme shifted from length of unemployment to 'non-business wise'. These policy changes fitted closely with the government's focus on efficiency and the reduction of state regulation. This included the expectation that the private sector would deliver as many goods and services as possible.

This policy has been evident in other business development programmes such as Business Grow, whose initial aim was to encourage small business growth to provide an increase in jobs. When these programmes were attached to more commercially focused Enterprise Agencies, however, the tendency was to concentrate on economic growth rather than job creation. In Christchurch, for example, the major referral agency for the programme has been the Business Development Board, which delivers a number of programmes aimed at encouraging growth and development, none of which mention job creation.<sup>14</sup>

Furthermore, these agencies received far greater funding than the Resource Centres and became the voices in the political arena for small business and enterprise development. These agencies have lobbied for growth and development of small business, not increased job creation, although the increase in self-employment may have been a result of some of these policies. However, a more likely explanation is that of the continued recession in particular sectors of industry and among certain groups of people (Haines, 1991). As has been previously noted women have not been the major recipients of these programmes.

Femco secured the Be Your Own Boss package in the programme's first year of operation and the focus of the organisation became even more aligned with self-employment and business advisory services. With this profile came the demand for a professional image and the employment of qualified professional personnel. This increased the costs to Femco, for again

---

<sup>14</sup> Of the 4,413 referrals made to agencies by Business Grow in Christchurch 27% (1,218) have been to the Business Development Board, with the remaining 73% being shared by a further 13 agencies. The next highest number of referrals is 1.3% (617) to the Canterbury Development Corporation (Business Grow report, January 1995).

the organisation attempted to respond in the entrepreneurial way being fostered by the new government enterprise packages.

## **9. FEMCO AND RESTRUCTURING**

Femco moved into new premises sharing an entire floor of a city building with other women's businesses, primarily counsellors and therapists. Femco was to manage the floor, provide the receptionist and undertake the cleaning contract. The manager asserted that these activities would cover the costs of the move and provide Femco with additional revenue. However, the reality of the situation was that Femco spent a much greater proportion of time than was budgeted on issues and problems concerned with the running of the floor and communication between tenants. The employment of a receptionist at a high pay rate, as the other tenants required specialist services, exacerbated the problem. Femco began to incur substantial losses and had to address the issue by restructuring and cutting costs. The delivery of business advisory services continued, but at a reduced level and initially the emphasis was placed on fee paying clients in an attempt to reduce the debt. Start-up business advice was given as a government contract provided funding for this service. The organisation undertook a review of the labour pool and eventually moved out of work provision in this area. This took place over a period of 18 months as Femco had contractual obligations. The workers undertaking the work at the time were offered the contracts and continued working as self-employed contractors although Femco maintained the equipment and provided the clerical support and payroll functions. After considerable negotiation with the other tenants in the building Femco relinquished the management contract and sought cheaper premises before the termination of the lease, to avoid the substantial overhead costs of being in the premises. Further detail on this and how these issues were resolved is contained in Chapter 5.

## **10. CONCLUSION**

It is evident that some women are increasingly endeavouring to become economically independent, either through necessity or through a desire to have a greater measure of control over their lives. In New Zealand, many women have experienced a number of barriers and have received minimal assistance from the State or the business sector, to further their enterprise activity. The State has delivered contradictory messages to women in this respect by, on the one hand providing enterprise assistance to would-be entrepreneurs (although not

designed for the specific needs of women), and on the other, implementing social and economic policy which favours individual and family responsibility, delivers to households rather than individuals and places a heavy tax burden on those on low incomes (Scott, 1987; Boston, 1992; Stephens, 1992; St. John, 1993; Hyman, 1994).<sup>15</sup> The family is encouraged to accept responsibility for economic *independence* and in doing so renders women economically *dependent* (Koopman-Boyden and Scott, 1984; Briar, 1992; Kelsey, 1993). This is illustrated by statements made by the government with regard to the 1990 benefit cuts:

*...the new policy direction demands a core family need test to encourage family responsibility before the State accepts responsibility... this reflects the view that spouses do contribute to family resources and it is important for society that sharing is the right thing to do* (Shipley, 1991, cited in Briar, 1992: 57).

Such a statement assumes, although not explicitly stated, that women and men can participate equally in households and have equal access to the resources being shared. Given the persistence of a higher earning capacity of men in New Zealand, this is obviously not the case.

Femco's experience was that their clients did not fit this image at all.

*The majority of women who came through our doors to sign up with us didn't live in that kind of environment at all (two parent families).*

(Early Co-ordinator)

The goal of economic independence for women, is indeed a difficult one and remains elusive for the majority of women in New Zealand (Briar, 1992). The increasing numbers of women's enterprises in the form of self-employment has allowed some women to act in an independent manner. The numbers of women who choose this route however, remains small in comparison with those who work as employees: 12% of women in the employed labour force (Statistics New Zealand, 1993: 95). Earnings for self-employed women also remain low. The median income group for both self-employed women and women on wages or salaries was \$15,001-\$20,000. The median income group for self-employed men was \$25,001 - \$30,000 (N.A.C.E.W., 1993: 20-21). This suggests that self-employment may fulfil other needs for

---

<sup>15</sup> The 1990 National government adopted the 'core family' unit for all forms of social assistance (Boston, 1992).



women, for example, flexibility in hours worked, which enables women to continue their responsibility for caring work in our society (Tepper and Tepper, 1980; Gray, 1993; N.A.C.E.W., 1993). Femco, in attempting to provide for those women entering entrepreneurial activity encountered these contradictions as the organisation itself became more dependent on the state for its own survival. While the founders of the organisation had wanted to increase the amount of 'employment' funding available to women, they had also wanted to model independence to women. The economic policies of the last decade however, made this desire difficult to achieve as the individualistic, free market model encouraged competition and reduced co-operation (Saville-Smith, 1987; Bunkle and Lynch, 1992; Else, 1992).

Femco has faced the challenges of liberal feminist ideology, new right economics, competition and commercial realities. The organisation attempted to respond by acting in an entrepreneurial way, building alliances and delivering, through the labour pool to women wage and salary earners and through the business advisory service to self-employed women. The recruitment of new Board members with the skills and credibility for the new environment also produced a shift away from the original lesbian feminist, community-business development model, to a more orthodox small business model. Conflicts then arose from this clash of two distinct cultures within the organisation - non-traditional work for women set primarily in the trades sector, and the professional area of business training and advisory services. The way the agency responded to these tensions is the focus of the discussion on the organisation's structure and operation in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER 5

### FROM DREAMS TO REALITY: THE ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXT

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the development of Femco is explored from its origins as a lesbian feminist support group, to an organisation providing services for women disadvantaged in the labour market, then to a community development business with a focus on business skills and enterprise development.

The preceding chapters have illustrated the practical difficulties Femco encountered as it attempted to operate from a particular philosophical standpoint while competing in a private sector, commercial environment. There were often conflicts between pursuing commercial competitive strategies and addressing the needs of women disadvantaged in the labour market. These conflicts posed challenges to Femco's feminist principles and it is the way the organisation addressed these challenges and the organisational processes it used, that is discussed in this chapter.

Femco was committed to running an organisation which would empower those working within it by the use of collective decision-making processes and non-hierarchical structures. However, the tensions and conflicts inherent in all organisational forms proved to be even greater in a feminist organisation where the need to model alternative ways of working was part of the feminist agenda. The study shows that the demands from funding agencies, Board members and staff were perceived and acted on quite differently depending on where women were located in the organisation. Clashes of values and conflicts between different sections within Femco were rarely dealt with until the organisation faced a crisis, usually precipitated by shortfalls in funding. Early attempts to resolve the financial problems by exploring independent business ventures were often met with resistance from women in positions of authority. The women who had founded the organisation had backgrounds in grass roots community work and no business experience. This, coupled with the policy environment which provided funding for Femco's activities, inhibited them from any real risk

taking, particularly with regards to financial decisions. However, as Femco grew and diversified, in response to a changing policy environment, the organisation attracted business focused Board members and managers, which led to a more commercial approach to financial decisions. I argue that this response proved inappropriate for a non-profit, feminist organisation. It was inappropriate because Femco, by focusing on the financial viability of the organisation, severely compromised its founding feminist principles when the economic environment became increasingly competitive. The competitive environment required Femco to seek highly qualified women to work in the labour pool whereas their client group was largely unskilled and unqualified. In addition, financial crisis tended to obscure the underlying issues of conflict with respect to values and political orientation and the shifts of power within the organisation.

Femco's ability to maintain its commitment to collective decision-making and to addressing issues of power and equality within the organisation, lessened with the movement into large scale contracting and business advisory services. These moves, in response to the demands of the economic and social environment within which the organisation operated, were in tension with the organisational goals of co-operation and collectivism. I argue that these contradictions were addressed differently by different Boards of the organisation and that at times Femco operated more like a commercial organisation than a feminist one. The study shows that these contradictions were only addressed in response to financial crisis, not in response to the needs of Femco's women clients.

Certain issues arose repeatedly over the ten year period of the study, but were seldom addressed effectively, usually due to the 'fire fighting' that appeared to be needed when the tensions surfaced. I argue that the strength of Femco to withstand these threats to its continued existence depended largely on the positions of power, outside the organisation, of key individuals within Femco. The absolute commitment of the Board and most staff to the continued operation of Femco also enabled the organisation to continue to function when under serious stress. Interviews with women involved in Femco in a variety of positions, provide a rich source of information about these common issues, conflicts and threats to the organisation. This chapter details these difficulties and argues the case for organisations to

consistently evaluate changes in policy and direction against their original goals and objectives.

## 2. FEMINIST ORGANISATIONS

Much of the literature on organisations is contained within the discipline of management, and focuses on efficiency and profitability. Sociological analysis of organisations explores the social relations within organisations.<sup>1</sup> Within organisational theory, feminist theory and experience has largely been ignored and the models presented are either male-defined or attempts at gender neutrality.

*Gender, sexuality, reproduction and emotions of women [are seen to lie] outside of the organisational boundaries* (Acker, 1992: 253).

The mainstream literature on women entrepreneurs has centred on comparisons with men and has focused on personal attributes (Martin, Pere, Cameron, and Lowe 1992), women's career patterns, financial independence and strategies for survival in the male domains of business and management (Goffee and Scase, 1985; Welsh, 1988; Hisrich and Brush, 1987; Still, 1990; Moore, 1990; Lee-Gosselin and Grise, 1990; Carter and Cannon, 1988). The literature gives only limited insight into how women organise their businesses or organisations, or the effect of state policies on women's decisions to participate in entrepreneurial activity. Femco, providing paid work for women in non-traditional occupations appears to be unique in that it involves working as a voluntary feminist organisation within a commercial arena (contracting for work) and attempting social change (through broadening occupational choice) for disadvantaged women (those returning to the workforce with few formal skills or recognised qualifications).

Femco's experience is more consistent with the literature concerning the activities of feminist organisations since the 1970's. Pringle and Henry, in documenting the literature, note that:

*the conflicts that arose frequently centred around the tension between theory and practice or the ideology of empowerment and equality and the need to get things done* (Pringle and Henry, 1993: 6).

---

<sup>1</sup> A critical and selective review of the literature is contained in (Mann, 1993: 8-52).

See also (Baker, 1982; Freeman, 1973). However, most of the organisations documented in this literature involved service provision in the welfare area (e.g. rape crisis centres, women's refuges, women's health centres). There are few studies of feminist organisations operating within a commercial setting - the general exception being women's bookshops (Woodul, 1978). Pringle and Henry's study documents Maori women's organisations working in this area. However, the major influence on these organisations' culture, was the understanding and identification with Maori values and practices (Pringle and Henry, 1993). The few studies which have explored the issue of gendered organisation theory have suggested that new analysis is needed to explore and explain both women's and feminist organisations, and women's experiences within organisations (Mann, 1993: 18-20). In addition there has been very little exploration of organisations within the voluntary sector and the studies that have been done generally take no account of gender in their explanations (Butler and Wilson, 1990; Handy, 1988; Young, 1985). Some studies have focused on the role of women within voluntary organisations in the welfare sector. These studies note the replication of the sexual division of labour within the organisations and the competitive and hierarchical management practices of some organisations, but also the potential for the fostering of cultures which can empower women (Vellekoop-Baldock, 1990; Cull, 1992).

It is clear from studies on voluntary organisations that the structure and functioning of these organisations is constrained by the strength of prevailing ideologies in a way that is almost never present in commercial organisations. While all organisations have their own particular culture, most commercial organisations do not require their members, workers or participants to hold particular philosophical positions, as is often assumed in voluntary organisations. In general, in voluntary organisations, it is the vision not the rules which binds the people together (Handy, 1988). Feminist organisations add to this the belief in the need to model alternative ways of working and the need to value, if not equally then as equitably as possible, every woman's experience and reality. Feminist organisations have sought to redefine popular organisational theory and practice and to place value on aspects of organisation and women's lives other than efficiency and profitability (Mann, 1993). This creates enormous tension when the organisation seeks to work in the commercial arena or to provide services for particular client groups (Freeman, 1973; Baker, 1982). Accountability and decision-making mechanisms are often based on trust and altruism, collectivism and co-operation rather than

formal reporting structures (Butler and Wilson, 1990). Indeed as Charles Handy has commented:

*To many in the voluntary sector, organisation means management, and management reeks of authoritarianism, of capitalism, of business and bureaucracy* (Handy, 1988: 2).

Femco incorporates the features of both the voluntary sector and feminist organisation. Its beginnings were influenced by the values and beliefs of its founding members, who were primarily lesbian feminists who believed that the organisation could, and indeed should, be different in principle and practice from patriarchal, capitalist organisations.

*There was a group of us who used to meet who were all involved in the community employment area and the main point of discussion was always about the gangs and contracting. There were four of us women and we got brassed off that that was always the focus and that it was kind of seen as a joke what we were doing, so we decided we'd go and start our own group for support. So we started our own work group for support. From that we had this dream that there could be a women's organisation that could do contract work and part-time work, similar to what the guys were doing with the gangs, but with a whole different philosophy - a feminist philosophy. It meant that it was about the empowerment of women and women's economic development.*

(Original Board Member)

The values and networks of those founding members remained particularly strong in the first years of operation and influenced the women who became involved in the organisation at a decision-making and advisory level. This congruence between the values and beliefs of organisation founders and the resultant culture and functioning of the organisation has been confirmed in other studies (Pringle and Henry, 1993). The changing of the original culture can cause conflict and threaten the stability and continued existence of the organisation (Young, 1985; Butler and Wilson, 1990).

*I think the lesbian community in that organisation was probably the strongest community and I think that had a lot of influence on the direction. Also the pool of resource women it*

*had to draw on came from those community links and I think that's really important. I always think whoever starts anything, their flavour and their connections has a great influence on the direction and on who gets involved, because it's the community and the networks. I think it was implicit. I don't think it was ever formally discussed. I think when I left everyone (on the Board and working in the office) was lesbian.*

(Early Co-ordinator)

## 2.1 Femco's Origins

Femco grew from the community development principles of grass-roots activism and the needs of the lesbian feminist workers in the community employment field. Its focus on non-traditional work, its community work base and feminist political agenda, contributed to strong, determined, often lesbian women becoming involved in the organisation and committed to its goals. It was also strongly rooted in class and race issues and saw the need to spread the feminist struggle and gains to all women. Founding members had informal discussion on how to broaden the organisation's base.

*There were differences about that. Is it a problem when most of us are lesbians and we employ lesbians? What about the non-lesbian women? Some of us thought that wasn't a problem at all and some that it was, and that if we had a lesbian working for the organisation then the non-lesbians, who would be in the majority, would be put off. I remember that kind of anxiety. Or that employers would be put off because they wouldn't want to employ a bunch of butch dykes with spiky haircuts and denim jeans. I liked it as a lesbian support group and I wasn't happy with compromising especially in employment, just to keep people happy.*

(Founding Member)

A conscious attempt was made at one time to recruit non-lesbian women to the Board and to increase the numbers of non-lesbian workers. Sometimes, though, those recruited became lesbian after working within the organisation.

*We were trying to get more straight women than lesbian women because we were - all of us - really aware of that whole issue. But there's the whole thing of why someone is drawn to an all women's organisation. Its an endless question of what comes first I suppose. The present administrator though, has been with us a while and she seems extremely comfortable and happily married!*

(Early Co-ordinator)

In reality it was difficult to draw different women into administrative and labour pool jobs and the organisation was always more attractive to some women than others. Different clients would come when different services were delivered. This did in fact happen and caused a clash of values which is discussed later in this chapter.

Femco's community work underpinnings meant initially, that the women running the organisation had among their number those from the client group. Workers were part of the Board and shared in the decision-making. Inclusiveness and equity were important bottom-line policies. The women who would most benefit from such an organisation, namely those who had been excluded most from economic activity - low-income women, beneficiaries, would-be tradeswomen, Maori women, lesbian women - were involved in the running of the organisation, and the views of these groups were constantly canvassed (Femco, minutes 1986-1989).

The most frequently recurring theme from Femco's documents and the interviews has been the demands for role clarification and accountability mechanisms between the Board and Femco's workers. This is not surprising given the size of the organisation, its feminist beginnings and the desire to put the 'personal political' into action. The founders of Femco were not the workers within it, and, although early recruitment did reflect the feminist and community-work beginnings of the founders, changes inevitably occurred with the provision of services. Conflicts arose from the very beginning and have continued to do so as early values and principles clashed with the commercial environment within which the organisation was attempting to work.



Charles Handy (1988) discusses these conflicts and concludes that assumptions and values conflict when voluntary organisations attempt to provide services, because definitions of success change when costs and standards must be reflected in the equation.

*The difficulty was trying to be self-sustaining and having an experienced person to supervise workers, a woman. We were finding work for women who didn't have experience - for many women this was a whole new direction. We were trying to do too many things at once. We underestimated the skill that was needed in the trades too.*

(Original Board Member)

The co-ordinator was concerned to make the client providing the work the primary client, but she was also responsible for the women wanting the work. Balancing the two and trying to make it work in the way the organisation envisaged it working, was not the reality of the commercial world.

*The conflict was talked about, but not all saw the conflict. We had no-one experienced in the business area. We did a lot of patch up jobs. It was a lot of worry because I was concerned about the client not getting a good job and that did happen from time to time. I spent a lot of time trying to figure out how to make it better. It was like a bad relationship, fix this bit, if I just do that, sort of thing. To be in small business which Femco was trying to do you have to be tremendously committed, work really really hard and break a lot of rules and not necessarily be nice. The decision-making structure in Femco was so cumbersome that there was no way you could actually compete in the market place. When you're in small business the primary relationship is with the client.*

(Early Co-ordinator)

Yet another view was that Femco should set up its own companies to employ the women clients of the organisation. The policy environment at the time, which encouraged training and self-employment, however, was not conducive to an organisation, set up for charitable purposes, running their own businesses. In addition, the women on the Board of the organisation had no skills in the business area and were not prepared to take the risks such

ventures would need. The issue of raising capital for such ventures was not discussed as the proposals did not get past Board discussions.

*It created a huge conflict between myself and the people running Femco. I became acutely aware that if we wanted to create stable work situations for women who wanted to work in non-traditional trades, we were going to have to do it ourselves because no-one else was going to employ them. I wanted to start completely new projects, like set up a painting company. I was into building kit set houses, buying a bakery, all that sort of thing because at the end of the day we were only going to find short term project work for people if we didn't take that extra step. This created a huge conflict because the things I was suggesting involved taking risks which self-employment does, enterprise does. It involves spending lots and lots of money, borrowing lots and lots of money, taking huge risks, not sleeping at night and doing an enormous amount of work. I don't think they minded the enormous amount of work but they were terrified of taking risks and there was no way they wanted to borrow money. They could see self-employment as the reality but they didn't see it as Femco setting up those things.*

(Early Co-ordinator)

One founding member remembers clearly the debate about borrowing. She was concerned about the women wanting to work for Femco in casual work and was committed to assisting women to re-enter the workforce. She was interested in change and consciousness raising and did not see the organisation's role as a business in the capitalist system.

*I had this thing about buying into the capitalist system even though we were part of it. I can remember some women suggesting we go and get an overdraft and I was absolutely horrified that as a community organisation we would owe money. These women had come from a whole different background from me, it was fine that you lived on an overdraft. I just couldn't fathom how that could be.*

(Original Board Member)

More recently, evidence of a community organisation operating commercial ventures, in response to demands from shortfalls in funding and to provide stability for unemployed members, has been documented (Pringle and Henry, 1993; Te Whanau o Waipareira Trust,

1995). At the founding stages of Femco however, this was not a common practice and the organisation saw itself as breaking new ground with respect to its operation in the commercial arena.

Despite considerable effort being put into collective processes and consensus decision-making the organisation was continually faced with the reality of market place pressures and often reverted to practices more familiar to conventional business structures than feminist collectives, although such decisions often had far greater ramifications than would be expected in other businesses. For example, when the investigation of a business proposal took the agency 'into the system' at the planning tribunal, a decision concerning the process, was made by the Board, without gaining the co-ordinator's support. This caused considerable conflict and precipitated the resignation of the co-ordinator.

*We had a woman lawyer who would represent us in the planning but somebody else from Femco had to go and so one of us from the management team went. One of the co-ordinator's at the time got really upset and actually resigned because she felt it was a judgement on her because she always wore jeans and T shirts and she had quite an abrupt manner. She said we should respect how everyone was but we knew that if she had walked into that meeting we wouldn't have even got past the first beat. I learned that you need to sit down and sort that out and explain the reasons why and come to an agreement on that before you do the task and we didn't do that. We did get the planning permission but it all ended up backfiring.*

(Original Board Member)

Frustration with delays, missed opportunities and lack of risk-taking pepper the organisation's minutes and reports. Attempts at resolution were invariably time-consuming, painful and the outcomes never totally acceptable.

*Femco was saying if you only want to work one day a week that's fine, but the organisation was a bloody nightmare and that's why I think the co-ordinators didn't stay very long because the organisation was just so difficult. I think that a lot of women went through agonising times through being involved in Femco and that's not what it should have been.*

*We spent hours and hours trying to sort out a management structure that was still feminist and we were trying to do that without losing the feminist philosophy and it was bloody painful. We never created, I don't believe, that new way of working and I think we're still searching for it.*

(Original Board Member)

From 1986 to 1990 Femco operated legally, although completely autonomously, under the umbrella of an existing Women's Employment Trust, which was providing training courses for women. Femco established its own Trust and received charitable status in 1990, maintaining informal links with the Women's Employment Trust until that organisation was wound up.

The overall objective of Femco was that women should be able to control their own working situation. This could be through generating self-employment, encouraging women's work co-operatives, and the provision of temporary, casual work. Femco was also committed to working towards raising the status of women's work. In the long term it was hoped that a labour pool would be organised and run by the women within that pool. In this way it was anticipated that the labour pool would become the trading arm and return a profit for Femco to create further employment opportunities and to expand the training and support services.

Femco was also keen to provide a model of good employment policies and practices within the organisation, and throughout its history has attempted to do so. Femco was clear from the start that as an organisation it would work from a feminist perspective and included those words in its Trust deed. Definitions of a 'feminist perspective' varied between individuals and at different periods within Femco's history.

*The organisation had a feminist philosophy. It meant that it was about the empowerment of women and women's economic development.*

(Original Board Member)

*The structure was a feminist structure. It was a kind of collective and there was a lot of input from the workers as well and it was not a hierarchical structure and that was a difficulty as well in a way. It was pro-women and pro-women's needs and recognised the difficulties women face.*

(Early Co-ordinator)

*I feel like the majority of jobs are structured around a pretty archaic notion that a man can get up in the morning, put on his clothes and go to work. He doesn't have to do any thing else during the day. He comes home at night and every thing is done, tea is on the table. The majority of families are not like that. The majority of women who came through our doors to sign up with us didn't live in that kind of environment at all. So I think we were feminist in that we didn't just make allowances for that, we built a whole premise of the organisation around that, in that a woman came in and said I've got between the hours of nine to three to work and we actually tried to fit in with her .*

(Early Co-ordinator)

All women interviewed for this thesis identified themselves as feminist and definitions ranged from the empowerment of women, challenging the status quo, equal rights, improving women's status to simply working with women.

Femco was committed to positively valuing women's needs and aspirations and women would be given the practical tools to participate in the economy and the philosophical tools to challenge their position and work collectively to provide equity and dignity for all.

*Femco was to support women and also to recognise that women could do things that they weren't always credited with being able to do .*

(Early Board Member)

Furthermore, the process by which the organisation functioned was seen as important as the services it delivered. To this end Femco operated with a voluntary management group who provided 'hands on' support, guidance and supervision for its workers. Management team and workers met regularly and decision-making was on a consensual basis. Femco was keen to appreciate and recognise women's unique skills and experience gained as care-givers in the home.

*Initially the decision making processes were excellent. We were included in all the meetings, the processes were collective, people were listened to.*

*Femco existed for the convenience of the women - like if women had children and they had to have childcare.*

(Early Co-ordinator)

### 3. FEMCO AND THE MINISTRY OF WOMEN'S AFFAIRS

Femco, like all organisations, was influenced by the economic context in which it was operating and in particular the fourth Labour Government's women's policies and the establishment of the Ministry of Women's Affairs. Although Femco did not officially begin until 1986, when it employed its first worker, discussions, networking and planning had taken place between its founders from 1985, and much discussion and organising at the time centred around the new ministry. Regional forums for women were held throughout the country in 1984, attended by large numbers of women representing all sections of the community.

*The purpose of the forums was to give the women of New Zealand the opportunity to contribute to the process of establishing the priorities of the new Ministry of Women's Affairs, within the framework of the Labour government's Women's Policy. That policy had been formulated after extensive consultation with members of the Labour Party, both women and men, and had passed through a thorough decision-making process within the party. The second purpose of the forums was to discuss ways in which the Ministry could communicate with women, and they with the Ministry (Office of the Minister of Women's Affairs, 1985).*

The ministry was set up after widespread consultation and amid huge expectations. From the outset the Ministry attempted to model an organisation on feminist principles and to provide information to women's organisations. The inclusion of Te Ohu Whakatupu (Maori Women's Secretariat) within the Ministry was an example of an attempt to share more equitably with Maori women. The Ministry was a piece of affirmative action within the system; a recognition of women's social and economic disadvantage and unequal access to the structures in which public policy decisions are made. The Ministry had a feminist brief which in effect was to challenge and change the system that had established it. Feminists were understandably wary of the ability of a government department to effect change for women. The state was seen by

some as a reflection of the racist and patriarchal forces in society. As such, any institution set up by the State was viewed as an attempt to co-opt and ghettoise feminist struggles and to diffuse that energy (Washington, 1988: 4). Sally Washington also noted that the Ministry was not like other government departments in its decision making process.

*Decisions are made collectively (a basic feminist principle) as far as the imposed hierarchical structure of a government department will allow. This means that the imminent appointment of a new Chief Executive should not mean a substantial change in direction for the Ministry. The Ministry's work is also directed by a feminist perspective and is based on a feminist brief. Having a sympathy with and a commitment to the aims and objectives of the Ministry is included in job descriptions as a criterion for appointment. It is on this understanding that I base my confidence that the feminist momentum of the Ministry will continue* (Washington, 1988: 6).

The Ministry in the first three years worked to maintain links with women working in community organisations by providing information and by ensuring employees had links into the various aspects of the 'women's community'. Those working in the Ministry saw themselves working for change within the system and saw this as a valid feminist political strategy. Modelling feminist processes to show that things could be done differently, was an important part of the Ministry's policy.

The Ministry, under the leadership of its first Chief Executive, Mary O'Regan devoted a considerable amount of time developing internal relationships and collective decision-making processes and emphasising, in particular, its commitment to biculturalism. A bicultural environment was seen as one in which people have an acceptance and a knowledge of, the equal value of the customs and concepts of two cultures and are able to operate in both. A necessary prerequisite of this is the equal sharing of power and resources. There was a strong belief from the start in the view expressed by Mary O'Regan 'that the way you get there greatly affects the quality of the outcome' (O'Regan and Varnham, 1992).

Many women, particularly middle class feminists, felt they had a voice in the policy making process and that they were able, for the first, time to gain information which would enable

them to make effective decisions and to lobby for change. There were indeed 'great expectations'.

Femco tried to adhere to similar feminist principles of organisation at different stages of its growth. Commitment to the principle of power-sharing and providing a supportive work environment added considerable tension to the work of the organisation as the particular needs of workers were accommodated. For example, when a worker's marriage broke up it was agreed that the supervision allocation could be used for counselling. Labour pool workers were at one time provided with free tampons; study leave was granted; education and licence fees paid; generous leave was given; and the Board looked upon any request with flexibility and sympathy (Femco, minutes 1990-94). Demands from funding bodies and the level of funding changed over time however, and the degree of flexibility Femco could provide, was to a certain extent determined by those demands.

#### **4. FEMCO: INTERNAL FUNCTIONING**

##### **4.1 Board and Staff Relationships**

Some of Femco's problems, such as tensions between Board and paid staff, which had occurred from the beginning, could be seen as typical of any organisation, whether in the public or private sector, and an indication of a dynamic business. Butler and Wilson (1990) in their study of the voluntary sector noted common themes emerging around roles and responsibilities of Boards and staff which almost always centred on issues of conflict and tension between formal organisation and support systems and the needs of staff to preserve autonomy and personal development (Butler and Wilson, 1990: 153). Co-ordinators, and later managers, were often unsure of how far their responsibility extended. Boards were keen to be a policy forum only, but the limited experience of some staff, often meant they played a semi-managerial role. The roles were easily blurred and required constant revisioning and restating. This reflective process did not always take place and when it did it was often too late. The inability of organisations to avoid crises by timely planning and the implementation of reforms and thereby avoiding radical restructuring is a feature of other organisations in the voluntary sector (Young, 1985).



For Femco, major problems which could not be contained within the organisation began to arise when the functions were diversified into providing business advisory services and business training (See Chapter 4 pp. 92-94). At the same time, there was a push for a more commercial focus for the labour pool and a drive into private-sector contracting (See Chapter 3 p. 61 ). It was also at this time that the composition of both Board and staff began to change. This shift towards business advisory services was a direct response to changes in government policy and to the availability of increased and more secure funding, for organisations providing advice to those establishing their own businesses. Responding to the incentive to focus more intensively on business advice and less on providing work led to a greater reliance on government funding and shifted the balance of power from Femco to the principal funder, the government. Femco itself therefore, encapsulated the contradictions inherent in the government's policy shift towards economic liberalism. On the one hand Femco was advocating economic independence and entrepreneurial activity while on the other it was becoming more dependent on the state for its own existence. In effect, Femco acted as a private agent of public policy. While the labour pool was operating in the commercial world it was generating funds from sources other than direct government grants and was therefore able to exercise some autonomy. Ironically, the shift to offering advice for those entering business involved more direct government funding and less control, as Femco was required to meet the contractual obligations imposed by the funding body. Other research into voluntary organisations (Butler and Wilson, 1990) has concluded that the relationship with funding sources has a significant effect on the management of organisations over time.

*Strategy is constrained when money is received from state agencies which, justifiably from their perspective, wish to see their financial support utilised in a manner congruent with their interests and which do not always coincide with the preferences of the voluntary organisation* (Butler and Wilson, 1986: 526, cited in Butler and Wilson, 1990:15).

*As the proportion of total income grew the power balance shifted towards the funder* (Butler and Wilson, 1990:15).

The potency of this funding relationship in their case studies led Butler and Wilson to conclude that:

***Managers should invest substantial time and energy into managing the funding relationship***  
(Butler and Wilson, 1990:16).

By 1989 shifts in government policy had resulted in considerable restructuring of the New Zealand economy and Femco found itself looking at ways to diversify its operation in order to continue to provide services for its client group, within the new competitive environment. When the government introduced a new funding package for resource centres, Femco successfully applied on the grounds that it was a resource centre for women and could provide a range of services including business advisory services (See Chapter 4 p. 82 ).

The Board of Femco changed as the original members moved on to other positions. In addition, the number of government field workers available to work with Femco decreased at this time. Femco had made extensive use of departmental field workers for advice, information and support with funding applications. The reduced numbers of people in these roles, in fewer government departments, impacted on how well informed the organisation was, with regards to government policies. In the past field workers had also been used to assist with the development of strategies for the continued delivery of Femco's services. By the end of 1990, the Board still included three women who were involved in paid community work, in the local and central government sectors, but two new members did not have specific women's employment backgrounds. One was a retired teacher with considerable experience in voluntary organisations and the other a self-employed tradeswoman with an education background who had come through the labour pool.

In 1990, the incoming National government rationalised enterprise funding and ceased the funding for resource centres. However, as Femco had signed a contract to deliver services for a three year period this rationalisation of resource centre funding did not have an immediate impact on the organisation.

The Board of Femco decided on a structure which would reflect the organisation's diversified functions. This structure consisted of the Business Advisory Service, the Labour Pool, and the Administration of the organisation. It was decided that each function would have a co-

ordinator responsible for the running of that section of the organisation. The administrator was employed under the government-funded Restart programme,<sup>2</sup> the business advisory co-ordinator had been the earlier co-ordinator for the whole organisation and a new labour pool co-ordinator was appointed. The appointment of the business advisory co-ordinator was discussed at length by the Board, as Femco wanted to reward and retain the existing staff, but was also aware of the different skills required for the position. After interviews and discussion with referees it was decided that the appointment was sound (Femco, minutes August 1990). All workers were employed after positions were advertised and interviews held. The interview panels usually consisted of Board members and existing staff members.

By July 1990 it was considered necessary to appoint a marketing and promotions manager to increase the profile of the organisation and to attract more business both for the labour pool and the business advisory service. Because of her skills, the marketing and promotions manager also began to give business advice to women wishing to enter self-employment, and to review business plans for the Department of Internal Affairs under the S.C.O.P.E. programme.<sup>3</sup> Femco also gained endorsement from the Business Development Board to act as a business advisory service for the New Zealand Employment Service's self-employment programmes.<sup>4</sup>

With the increase in business advisory work, Femco actively sought to appoint an accountant to the Board. This appointment also enabled Femco to provide the accountant with work on a contract basis when qualified services were required. At this time, too, the labour pool began seeking larger more commercial contracts and the co-ordinator applied to the Canterbury Painting Contractors Association for the organisation to become a member. It was felt at this time membership of the association would give the organisation greater credibility when tendering for work and would allow the organisation to move out of the small domestic market in which it was concentrated.

---

<sup>2</sup> Government partial wage subsidy for community organisations and the public sector.

<sup>3</sup> Small Co-operative Enterprises - an Internal Affairs programme to encourage group development in income generating projects.

<sup>4</sup> The Enterprise Allowance, a New Zealand Employment Service programme entitles unemployed people who qualify for the allowance free business planning advice. Approved agencies are paid by New Zealand Employment Service. Femco's minutes, September 1990 document the organisation's approval by the service.

*There was a bit of active seeking. I seem to recall us saying we could do with a lawyer or a bank manager or somebody in that direction on the Board before we had them on the Board. We didn't say we could do with a painting contractor business and a lawn mowing business on the Board. It was because it was in a way new, the energy went that way. The timing is important though, for example, at that time the painting crew were having trouble finding jobs because suddenly there were lots of painters out of work and there were all sorts of painters offering to do it for ridiculous amounts per hour. That all happened at the same time - we needed to diversify.*

(Long standing Board Member)

Most of these decisions were taken with little discussion by the Board as the paid staff were given the authority and autonomy to carry out the broad goals of the organisation. It is common for organisations working within the voluntary sector to be strongly influenced by the staff employed. At this point in Femco's history the staff were undoubtedly more focused on commercial outcomes and were directing the organisation towards commercial operations.

*Someone would come into the office, would come on the staff and she would have a particular idea about something, for example with me it was that the labour pool was going to become part of the Master Painters Association and I felt like that was going to be a major coup and I still feel it was. I don't know that it got us anywhere but I still think it was an excellent thing for us to do and so that was like my baby and so I put emphasis on that. Someone else would come in and her emphasis was on business advisory services or running seminars or whatever and she would shunt her energy into that, which was great, but it also meant that we all had our own little actions happening and quite often we didn't have the wherewithal to back ourselves up.*

(Early Co-ordinator)

A planning day was held in February 1991, attended by Board members, the labour pool co-ordinator, marketing and promotions manager, the business advisory service manager and the administrator. Issues which had been raised constantly throughout the history of Femco were again addressed. The call for Board members with more time to give and/or more relevant

expertise was one such issue. This had not been satisfactorily addressed, although a policy for the appointment of Board members was developed. There was disagreement from the beginning with respect to the need for more Board members or Board members with different skills. The discussion centred around whether new members with specific skills would change the culture of the organisation and also whether more members would necessarily make Femco work any more effectively or efficiently. Both strands of the argument surface constantly in the minutes of the organisation and were frequently mentioned by those interviewed for this study.

*I was in the beginning quite resistant to it (professional women on the Board) because I thought it would change the whole thing of nurturing women re-entering the workforce. I did see it as a class issue. I thought that if we brought professional women on would they respect where these women were at? There were other issues too. Would they understand community development, could they work by consensus, could they work in a group.*

(Original Board Member)

*As for the composition of the Board., I don't think we need large numbers. I think it's better to keep it to smaller numbers as we've got, (and I'm not trying to keep things under my chest, I'm not looking for work) and use people on a sort of consultancy basis, because if you get the Board too big you're going to get into difficulties. The number we've got is quite sufficient for what we're trying to do. It doesn't matter how many people we drag in if we think we need - like we've done with the lawyer, when we need a legal opinion. So we have people on the periphery who we can drag in and ask for things and I think that's an easier model.*

(Long standing Board Member)

The field worker was aware of the difficulty of expecting all women to understand community development principles and commented that in the early days of the organisation it was usual to provide some training to new members, especially if those members were from outside the community work discipline.

*That's really high praise you can give Susan. When new people came on she always tried to get some kind of training. Having an accountant and a bank manager who have come up through a kind of professional teaching - like I'm the expert and the lay people don't know the system - I've spent years getting where I am and I don't want someone else telling me what I already know. So that is a big jump for people to make. I don't think you can expect people who aren't familiar with community development processes to be able to do that automatically - it's a skill - a learned thing.*

(Field Worker)

At the 1991 planning day, workers argued for closer supervision and support from Board members (Femco, minutes February 1991). There was obvious role confusion between the various functions of the organisation and in particular between the business advisory service and the marketing and promotions function. The marketing and promotions manager was involved in the service delivery of the business advisory service due to her skills in this area.

This was clearly a source of conflict between the two workers. Notes from the planning day show that business advisory service manager was calling for a clarification of the marketing and promotions role, in the business advisory service. All workers were asking for clarification of the roles and responsibilities of workers and Board (defined as management) and there was a feeling that the type of supervision being used was not sufficient on its own. The organisation had functioned with a system of 'peer supervision' where workers were accountable to each other and decision-making was a collective process, although each had autonomy over their respective section.

Following the planning day it was resolved that Femco would:

1. Encourage labour pool women to use the business advisory service to become self-employed.
2. Increase business-plan business.
3. Set up a system of clear monetary guidelines.
4. Investigate funding sources, sponsorship, set up regular newsletter for labour pool workers.
5. Develop policies for : image, monetary, capital expenditure, sponsorship, supervision, support and decision making, conflict resolution.

## 4.2 Financial Decisions

The Business Plan for this period shows a belief in self-sufficiency for the labour pool with it eventually returning a profit for other activities of the organisation.<sup>5</sup>

In line with these decisions the agency changed its policy on pay rates in 1991 and began using a sliding scale based on skill. This was a reflection of the changing economic context in which the agency was working, the changes in government funding and the different values and backgrounds of the Board and workers. The labour pool co-ordinator was exploring ways to attract more qualified and/or experienced workers and skill-based pay was seen as one way to do this. The debate on the issue centred around the need to make money and the types of workers needed to fulfil contracts. The feminist principle of equality and valuing contributions equally were not discussed.<sup>6</sup> The issue of relative pay scales and the valuing of contribution was also encountered by the Ministry of Women's affairs in its first years as noted by Mary O'Regan (O'Regan, 1992: 205). At this time the business advisory service also became a separate entity with its own financial accountability and management systems. This separation was carried out for a variety of reasons, not least the need to account for the L.E.E.D.S. funding which was primarily for business advisory services, but also to allow the two sections of the organisation to function independently financially. It was necessary to be able to show an accurate financial picture of both sections of the organisation. There was also a feeling that the two sections had different images, appealed to different markets and required different promotion. It was felt that the clear promotion and marketing of the organisation would be best achieved by a distinct separation.

*You had an organisation that was providing supportive employment for part-time, casual workers and part of the organisation was providing training and advice and support for independent businesswomen. My understanding of the women using the labour pool was the self-esteem was low, confidence was certainly low and those women felt they needed*

---

<sup>5</sup> Business Plan 1991/92.

<sup>6</sup> It had become increasingly difficult to compete in the commercial arena and the need to reward for skill had been identified by the labour pool co-ordinator. The Employment Contracts Act had begun to have an effect on contract labour prices and Femco was no exception when needing to meet the demands of the market place. Ironically the Act also provided Femco with the mechanism to employ on short term contracts.

*some support to get employment. Obviously the business advisory service was dealing with women who were so confident they thought they could create their own employment.*

(Field Worker)

*The labour pool were dealing with tradespeople and they needed to be made welcome and the business advisory service was trying to present a certain image so that women who were coming in looking for business advice would think that 'this is a go, it's not a scruffy bunch'. Whether that's good or bad that's the reality of it and we were trying to get the job done on both counts. Money was flying from one side of the organisation to the other. It was really difficult to know what money came from where, to pay whose wages. At one point we felt that if we were going to accept all this money, we've got to know where it's going. So, if we operated as different organisations we'd be able to see that, okay the business advisory service lent the labour pool \$50,000.*

(Early Co-ordinator)

The growth of the business advisory service led to pressure on Femco to produce higher-quality work and placed demands on the business advisory manager which stretched her capabilities. This resulted in complaints regarding the quality of financial advice (generally accountancy work), being provided by Femco, and the time taken to complete business plans. The complaints were dealt with by the Board in a way which both supported the manager publicly but also addressed the client's concerns. Some financial losses occurred as the errors were adjusted and clients were not charged for the work. Internally, the business advisory manager's abilities and professional judgement were questioned. Although Femco attempted to rectify the situation, the nature of the organisation and its funding base meant in reality little could be done. The manager appeared to be qualified to undertake the work and Femco had few options for training, particularly as the manager rejected criticisms of her competency. It appeared that the level of competency required increased as the business advisory service expanded, and clients were drawn from a wider base. Proposals also became more complex. Femco had no mechanism to deal with the issue. The business advisory service was operating as an autonomous unit with few checks and balances and its manager was the only person employed to give financial advice. In addition, the voluntary nature of the Board meant a heavy reliance was placed on information from the managers and there was little time to



investigate the accuracy of reports. The Board by this time, had recruited an accountant but she was the only member with qualifications in the financial area and was relatively new to the Board. She did oversee some of the work and corrected some mistakes. Detecting the mistakes before the information went to clients was an impossible task.

*We can only offer limited things and no promotion structure or anything like that. So they have to be idealistic in a way to work for us and yet that often means they don't have skills that they should have because they are idealistic.*

(Long standing Board Member)

The issue of priority for the agency's services and fear of moving away from the original goals was raised by the Board at this time, and the minutes note that:

*It is easy to be side tracked into profitable work that takes time and energy away from where Femco needs to be targeted* (Femco, minutes March 1991).

The 1990 National government's review of assistance programmes for unemployed people aimed at self-employment and small business, resulted in a shift away from 'programme' to 'project funding' (See Chapter 4 p 98). and had the effect for Femco of reduced funding overall. Information to the Board on the financial situation was not provided in a timely fashion, and by the time the Board was aware of the situation Femco had no option but to restructure. The reasons for the lack of information appear at this time to centre primarily around the skills of employees but also the Board's reluctance to mistrust or make heavy demands on the paid staff. The organisation was also driven by the staff and to a certain extent acted in a way common to workers in many voluntary organisations; as Butler and Wilson note, employees in voluntary organisations 'expect a great deal of personal space, autonomy and personal say in how the organisation is run' (Butler and Wilson, 1990: 163). This type of Board functioning is also typical of many organisations in the voluntary sector and of women's groups in particular who are also attempting to model different organisational behaviour <sup>7</sup> (Mann, 1993; Vellekoop-Baldock, 1990).

---

<sup>7</sup> The lack of information is not always confined to the public sector though as the collapse of the Fortex meat company illustrates. In a report on the court case in the Christchurch Press on 27 April 1995, the Chairman of the Board told the court that "as late as February 25 last year, within

*People were not saying what was really going on. I think there was conflict from that. Women were saying they'd done things when they absolutely hadn't done them. People were trying to cover their backs I feel, mostly. I don't think anyone was wilfully trying to do anybody out of anything. I think they felt that they could come up with the goods. But they'd be pushed for time and it snowballed. It seemed to me like a lot of conflict came out of not wanting to have conflict. It was like, if you had questions about the way I was doing something, it was, well we'll give her another month and see if she can pull it. Sometimes the Board didn't ask the right questions but I think there was personal accountability as well, like people being accountable to their own jobs, that was equally lacking.*

*There was a lot of impulse. There were an awful lot of decisions made on personalities of the people involved. I could get something if I could talk it up well enough. I felt there was a bit of shying away from making hard decisions a lot of the time. When people should have been fired - that sort of thing. I did it, I definitely did it as well so none of us wanted to do the hard thing. Being a feminist organisation, trying to do things differently is hard too. I certainly don't have that question resolved for myself. I think one way that would make it pull together a little bit more would be to have a much tighter set of objectives .*

(Early Co-ordinator)

In 1991 the Board asked the business advisory service manager for a report on the cash flow crisis situation. She suggested that the marketing and promotions position was ill conceived. Femco could not afford a position which concentrated solely on marketing the organisation. Furthermore, she believed that each section of the organisation was best placed to market and promote its own services. She recommended that the Board should:

1. Create a 40 hour business advisory position. (An increase of 10 hours)
2. Continue the 30 hour administration position.
3. Continue the 25 hour labour pool co-ordinator position.
4. Cease the 25 hour marketing and promotions position

(Femco, minutes April 1991).

These recommendations show the tendency to shift the focus of the organisation towards business advisory work which was seen to be more profitable than the labour pool at this time.

The Board reviewed the situation and the positions of the existing staff. Board members were influenced by a report which had been produced by the marketing and promotions manager, which argued for the appointment of an overall manager for the organisation. In deciding to appoint a manager the Board was hoping for reduced conflict between the two sections and a more co-ordinated approach to Femco's business. Board members were also wanting to assume a greater policy role and less day-to-day management responsibility. During the restructuring process and the difficulty with the quality of financial advice, the Board had been required to take control of an increasing amount of the managing of the organisation and members felt that this would be minimised with the appointment of a manager. The Board decided that the manager would be responsible for all of Femco's activities but would also have some operational responsibilities in either the labour pool or the business advisory service. The marketing and promotions manager was appointed to the position of Femco's manager, the business advisory co-ordinator was appointed as a business advisor at 20 hours per week, concentrating on chargeable hours, course preparation and tutoring (B.Y.O.B.),<sup>8</sup> the Administrator was re-appointed for 35 hours and the labour pool co-ordinator remained on 25 hours per week. The workers again asked for more commitment from the Board and for new members who had more time to give to the organisation (Femco, minutes May 1991).

The appointment of a manager was a radical shift from the beginning stages of Femco with its emphasis on feminist collectivity and reflected the on-going frustration of the Board with the demands for more involvement with the organisation. The majority of Board members were in full-time paid employment in demanding positions.

---

<sup>8</sup> Be Your Own Boss - a programme of enterprise training funded primarily by the Labour Department.

### 4.3 Board and Management: Roles and Functions

The issue of suitable Board members is a complex one. On the one hand what is required are people with skills, networks and an ability to positively advance the organisation, while on the other the appointment is voluntary and therefore needs to attract people who care about the philosophy and purpose of the organisation (Vellekoop-Baldock, 1990). The Board, by appointing a manager believed it could reduce its management role, to one of being accountable for funds and monitoring and measuring against goals and targets, set in conjunction with the paid staff and volunteers. These functions would be carried out through monthly Board meetings and a pre-Board meeting with the manager to discuss any staffing issues. Other staff would be free to attend the Board meetings and present their reports if they wished. The manager would be responsible for financial reports of both the labour pool and the business advisory sections. The Board had agreed on a structure which saw considerable delegation to the manager, and the Board taking a more commercial approach to the running of Femco. The manager and the labour pool co-ordinator's contracts included a performance bonus in an effort to increase the funding base to include commercial contracts. In addition, at this time, a bank manager was recruited on to the Board, because it was felt important to have more financial expertise available to the Board.<sup>9</sup>

A meeting in December 1991 called for further clarification of roles of Board and manager. It was decided that the manager would manage all day-to-day running of the organisation, staff supervision and seek funding. The Board would negotiate salaries, contracts, termination's, evaluation of the manager, approve capital expenditure and make final policy decisions. At this time it is also decided that only the manager needed to attend Board meetings and that she would represent all aspects of the organisation. This ensured more control in the hands of the manager and saw Femco functioning more like organisations in the private sector or public sector government departments. While this enabled the Board to take a less active

---

<sup>9</sup> The woman recalls that she had very little knowledge of the organisation but came on to the Board because she knew some of the other members and thought the organisation was providing a needed service. She had also had clients who had had poor advice from the service and believed there was a need for better financial advice. She also saw it as a way of giving something back to the community.

management role, it was working under a system which elsewhere assumes a greater bureaucracy and more checks and balances. The model was reflective of the work places of the some Board members, particularly the bank manager and the local authority worker. It was seen as being more efficient and involved placing great confidence in the manager. Again, women employed for a particular task were trusted implicitly to get on with the job and few checks were put in place.

*What was said was believed, and why shouldn't it be. If they have bits of paper that say they can do this and they talk - what comes out of their mouth says they can do that and yet that is not what it was like. They were not able to do a lot of things. It was a wonderful place for me to work coming from a really hard place and I had very few skills and I learnt a lot there and I was supported there. I'm really grateful for my time there and I don't think I could have been supported like that anywhere else. If it had been a private business I probably wouldn't have lasted five minutes.*

(Early Administrator)

By early 1992, the Board began to receive complaints with regards to the manager's performance and judgement. The minutes show that the Board had become increasingly concerned with the quality and timeliness of the information on which it was making decisions. The delegated authority has resulted in some unwise communications between Femco, its partners in the B.Y.O.B. programme and its funders. The Board moved to diffuse the situation, but was so unhappy with the manager's behaviour that the warning procedure was invoked. By this time the Board had become more aware of industrial relations issues and from previous unsatisfactory situations had become more pragmatic in its approach to employee relations.<sup>10</sup> Previously the Board had allowed unsatisfactory work performances to go unchecked for long periods of time and when absolutely necessary had responded with verbal reprimands rather than formal warnings. With the previous manager of the business advisory service this had resulted in a serious cash flow crisis exacerbated by tax errors and eventually culminated in the termination of the contract of that employee. The Board at this

---

<sup>10</sup> Some Board members, through their own paid employment are also more familiar with industrial relations issues and the consequences of poor communication and employee relations. The Employment Contracts Act has also highlighted these issues for the agency and many other small employers.

time tried to impress upon the manager, the need for care in business dealings and to provide her with the opportunity to improve.

#### **4.4 Expansion of Femco: Skill Requirements and Decision Making**

At the same time as the business advisory service expanded into training and small business advice, the labour pool employed a qualified painter and was accepted as a member of the Canterbury Painting and Contractors Association. This occurred in 1992, 18 months after the first application was made. A year later the labour pool co-ordinator tendered for and won a major contract for lawn mowing with the Christchurch City Council. These developments showed the credibility Femco had gained in the market place and the improved quality of the work. However, it was to be revealed later that the quality of financial advice available to the Board did not reflect this confidence, and the Board was unaware of the full financial picture of the organisation. The February 1992 minutes note the Board's concern about the lack of time to read reports and that decisions were being made on insufficient or unclear information. The meeting resolved that all reports were to be to the Board a week prior to the meeting. It is clear from subsequent minutes that this did not happen on a regular basis and the Board's unease with the decision-making process continued throughout 1992.

The extra work generated by the large contracts for both the labour pool (lawn mowing) and the business advisory service (B.Y.O.B.) increased Femco's income dramatically and also its expenditure as more people were employed to undertake the work.<sup>11</sup> Like many other voluntary organisations, Femco used subsidised labour wherever possible in the initial stages of a project. This, at times, meant workers were recruited by managers, with little or no input from the Board or other workers. For Femco, this resulted in tensions in the office between the labour pool and the business advisory service. The manager had operational responsibility for the business advisory service and this was where her skills were. This emphasis led to the labour pool workers feeling neglected and distanced from the organisation as a whole.

---

<sup>11</sup> Femco's income increased from \$137,098 in 1990/91 to \$214,216 in 1991/92 dropping \$205,018 to in 1992/93. Expenses increased from \$129,244 in 1990/91 to \$156,418 in 1991/92 to \$229,487 in 1992/93.

*There was always the talk of dissolving the labour pool and putting it all into the business advisory service and I think eventually that kind of thing undermines you anyway, and living from funding to funding too, of course. Those things do affect the work. Not much of the funding was really there to support the labour pool. I seem to remember it was mostly coming through to support the business advisory service. The huge amount we got from L.E.E.D.S. was for the business advisory service, so it was almost like that was held like - well not a threat - but it was supposed to be building up that side. I know it wasn't done to the detriment of the labour pool - but it kind of felt like that .<sup>12</sup>*

(Early Administrator)

As the manager was now the only employee reporting to the Board it was difficult to have these grievances heard. The Board on the other hand, expected the manager to address any such staffing issues with the appropriate action and report to the Board accordingly. The other workers did however, in the end make their opinions known and the Board expressed its dissatisfaction with the manager's performance in the human relations aspects of her job. According to the other workers, the style of management had become authoritarian with the manager reluctant to share information with her fellow workers, thus consolidating her control of the organisation as she was the only one with all the information. It was difficult for the Board to address this situation, given their desire to be only involved in policy direction and not operational matters.

Following the resignation of the manager to take up a permanent position with a government agency, the Board appointed the administrator to the position of acting manager, for two months, in conjunction with the accountant Board member, while seeking a new manager. The Board then decided it needed to employ a qualified accountant as manager to ensure more accurate financial information and to enable Femco to develop further the business advisory service and become more profitable by providing a complete range of services to small businesses. The Board assumed its problems stemmed from poor financial performance. On reflection, it would appear that the problems were a combination of the economic, social, and political environment and the lack of clear accountability expected from staff. A new manager

---

<sup>12</sup> The minutes do not record any suggestion of the labour pool discontinuing, although several workers have spoken of this time as feeling very insecure as to the future of the labour pool.

was appointed from outside the community and the small business sectors. She came from the Church bureaucracy and had recently re-trained as an accountant and had no work experience using her new skills.

This was a radical shift for the organisation, as Femco's philosophy was only briefly discussed with her in the interview process and she was employed primarily on her academic qualifications. She was also the only fully qualified accountant who applied for the position. The appointment may have caused considerable friction had it not been for her transfer two months later to Wellington for a better position. However, in the short time she was with Femco she introduced a new computer system, a more professional look to the office and better working conditions for the staff. She had also challenged Femco's Board about its expectations of the organisation and the need for more sophisticated systems and procedures, if Femco was to survive in the commercial world. With this reorganisation of the office and the forthrightness of the manager, the Board was made aware of the need to present a more professional image if it was to seriously compete in the commercial business advisory area. This appointment highlighted the Board's frustration with being responsible in a hands-on way with the operational running of the organisation. Other studies have indicated that as central governments have devolved social service work to the voluntary sector in contractual service agreements, a more professional and corporate delivery has been required. Following from this there has been a trend to sourcing managers from outside the voluntary sector. Such practices, while enabling the organisations to work more like the commercial corporate sector have led to serious conflicts within organisations between those who have been attracted to the sector because of their beliefs and the corporate managers (Butler and Wilson, 1990: 17:159). No discussion was held with regard to the desirability of Femco remaining in the business advisory market.

The Board maintained its belief in the need for a qualified manager and employed the accountant who had been recruited to the Board (and who had previously acted as manager in conjunction with the administrator), as a relieving manager. As she was a self-employed businesswoman, she accepted the appointment on a contractual basis whereby she remained self-employed and did not become an employee of Femco. At the time of her contract she had been on the Board of Femco for two and a half years and so was very familiar with the



organisation. She had also been used as a contract accountant by Femco, so she was familiar with the client base of the organisation. It was very difficult to recruit a qualified accountant as manager, largely because Femco could not afford to pay a competitive salary. The Board had been happy in the past with this woman's ability. She had also devoted considerable voluntary time to the organisation. Eventually the Board extended the contract and the former Board member became the manager of the organisation. There was considerable discussion by the Board at this time as there was some concern that the move from Board member to manager may require different skills and the Board was unsure of the new manager's overall ability. She had, however, acted in the position and appeared to be competent. Furthermore, she was not going to become an employee of Femco and the Board felt this gave them more options with regard termination, should that be required. She remained employed on a contract as a self-employed person.

The issue of the manager remaining a Board member was never clearly resolved. The Board felt the need to have financial advice and allowed the situation to remain whereby the manager/Board member gave that advice. The informality of Board meetings had always blurred the roles and authority of staff and Board and initially the separation of the manager from her responsibility as a Board member seemed unnecessary. There is no record of this woman resigning from the Board although there was a call from her for more clarification of responsibility within the first six months of her contract.

A special Board meeting in July 1993, resolved that:

- The Board and manager to deal with each other as equals and respect the rights of both sides.
- The manager has the right to the trust of the Board, except where the Board has reasonable grounds to suspect otherwise, and vice versa.
- Policy areas (Board's responsibility) are: staffing, becoming a Board member, grievances, sexual harassment, human rights, philosophy, training and up-skilling, capital expenditure.
- The meeting process will be: rotating chair, minute secretary, consensus decision making.

- Board member must co-sign cheques with manager for amounts over \$2,000 (Femco, minutes July 1993).

It is clear from these decisions that the manager was wanting to clarify the lines of control and accountability and that the Board was willing to place a large amount of trust in the manager. Throughout the history of Femco, the Board or management committee has tended to trust its employees implicitly and has allowed them a high degree of autonomy within the organisation. In this case the accountability was even more blurred as technically the manager was still a Board member, although in effect she acted as an employee and was excluded from discussions regarding her work performance and remuneration.

*It seemed to me like there were definitely times when the Board as an entity was saying 'I don't want to deal with this - I want someone to go in and take this thing over'. So if somebody came along who was saying I can do this, this and this, and I think we should do this, this and this then it was like "sounds great - give her the job". I entirely understand everybody was trying to run their own life and had their own jobs.*

(Early Co-ordinator)

Such a situation, by its very nature, demands a high degree of confidence and trust by both Board and workers, particularly the manager. Being sure what questions to ask, what information was required and having the skills to analyse the information presented, were on-going issues for the Board. In turn, the manager had the responsibility to decide what needed to be brought to the Board, what decisions require Board approval before taking action and which are able to be implemented and then reported on. These functions require a degree of practical skill and knowledge and an understanding of the organisational culture, aims and objectives by both Board and manager.

*You actually need to be better in a voluntary organisation than a business in your planning, because of the fact that there are so many things that actually influence what's happening that you're not in charge of. We were always putting out fires today instead of planning for tomorrow because that's what we needed to do to survive.*

(Board Member)

The manager/Board member was a qualified accountant and a self-employed small business person who saw Femco as a small business and began developing it accordingly. From the beginning she expressed concern about the viability of the labour pool in its current form, and its capacity to perform in the commercial arena. These concerns however, were expressed in terms of financial viability and paid little consideration to the objectives Femco was attempting to meet and in fact was funded to achieve.<sup>13</sup>

These discussions further distanced the labour pool from the business advisory service and workers in the labour pool felt their service was under threat. Clearly, Femco was attempting to deliver to two very different client groups and was having difficulty adhering to its original objectives. Government employment policy was funding services which encouraged unemployed people to become self-employed and Femco saw that this funding could also help the organisation to develop the labour pool and encourage some women within the pool to become self-employed. The reality was however, that the funding came with contractual obligations to provide business advisory services, and run courses for women wanting to become self-employed. There was no margin for liberal interpretation and increasingly the resources were used for the development and running of the business advisory services. The labour pool became directionless and without close financial supervision continued to run at a huge loss. (For other reasons for the loss situation see Chapter 3.) Various members have since expressed their concerns about this period.

*Because the manager was involved in the business advisory service she could see it expanding more and more, which was fine, but meantime the labour pool just sat in one spot and wasn't going anywhere and it also needed focus, so it still had to have its funding reviewed just like the business advisory service.*

(Administrator)

*There wasn't a conscious thing but there was definitely a different feeling when a large amount of resources were going into business advisory services and running those courses.*

---

<sup>13</sup> The minutes show no discussion on the overall objectives of the labour pool or of its continued need. The Board was being asked to make decisions on the financial situation alone, with respect to the labour pool. The objective of the business advisory service was discussed as it was felt that there was considerable potential for growth in that area.

*I can recollect at Board meeting 90% of the discussion and decisions would be concerning business advisory services. Then tagged on the end there might be two little bits about the labour pool - that's my recollection of it. The emphasis and I think the philosophy there was lost a bit. The labour pool got a bit lost and that was partly personality too. Some people couldn't have cared less, in a way, about the labour pool.*

(Long serving Board Member)

The inference here is that those people (who couldn't care less about the labour pool) were in control.

*I think there was a shift in the organisation towards the business advisory service. I felt like a lot of the impetus came from me (for the labour pool) I'm not saying I didn't have any support but I felt very very strongly about the labour pool. When there were managers it felt to me like the Board saw a lot of potential there. It wasn't that I didn't see it, I was absolutely focused on the labour pool. I think as an organisation things did start to shift at that point.*

(Early Co-ordinator)

Like many organisations, changes and authority shifts in Femco tended to occur in response to conflict and crisis (Butler and Wilson, 1990: 164).

The increased expenditure required to continue the labour pool's operation was finally financed by a bank loan. The Board made these decisions in response to reports from the accountant and on the advice of the bank manager. There had by this time been considerable delegation of responsibility within the Board for financial matters. The short-fall in funds was presented as cash-flow problems, with the inference that increased funding would be forthcoming from traditional grant sources. Delegation of responsibility for the acquisition of funding to the manager, also masked the seriousness of the problem from Board members.

By late 1993, the manager suggested moving premises and entering into a new venture with a number of women practitioners. This would involve renting the top floor of an inner-city building. The proposal was presented as a sound financial proposition which would increase Femco's independence as it would make a profit from the management of the floor and the cleaning contract. The Board agreed to the move without any reference to the projected costs

and how these expenses would be met. Again the manager was trusted to make this decision, and it was assumed that her expertise would ensure a sound financial decision was made. These financial decisions out-weighed any philosophical considerations, and the suitability of the premises for the overall objectives of the agency was not discussed at length.

*It was the way the information was presented to the Board by the manager that we actually got into that situation. If the information had been presented properly we would never have made that move, therefore we would never have got in debt to the tune we got in debt for. We would have probably got in debt because we still didn't have the control and we hadn't back costed - we tried but it wasn't sufficient what we were doing. We did ask for the figures but we were fobbed off and it was left until the last moment. The budget had all the figures in it but there was no substance to the figures. We believed her because she was an accountant and had letters after her name and we didn't. We accepted it blindly as she presented it to us. Now I am more careful about who I accept financial information from.*

(Board Member)

#### 4.5 Femco: Philosophy and Practice

Femco had moved considerably away from the original feminist collective way of working and was focused on the outputs and outcomes required by the new funding arrangements.<sup>14</sup> An indication of how far Femco had moved was the employment of a woman from a particular religious sect whose beliefs were fundamentally opposed to lesbianism. She later resigned when she discovered the sexuality of a co-worker and the members of the Board.<sup>15</sup> Her appointment had been made possible because discussions of the objectives of the organisation and its philosophy had become less and less frequent as Femco had expanded its service delivery. Responding to the availability of government funding for particular activities, rather than evaluating the needs of women in employment, also allowed the situation to arise. Furthermore, the sheer demands of running an organisation with considerable turnover and contracts within the private sector, required an attention to detail which left little time for philosophical debates. It is often financial crisis and rapid growth which forces organisations

---

<sup>14</sup> The community Employment Group in particular was asking for very specific outcomes for its funded projects and the agency responded by focusing its attention on meeting these objectives.

<sup>15</sup> Information from interviews with agency members.

to reassess their position in the world (Jaggar and Rothenberg Struhl, 1978; Young, 1985; Handy, 1988; Butler and Wilson, 1990).

Within weeks of moving premises it became clear that Femco was in serious financial difficulty. In addition, the co-operative working required to function within the collective of the new premises, caused considerable conflict between Femco and the other tenants on the floor. The negotiations to join with the group had been personally undertaken by the manager and had involved networking between her and the other individuals. The other tenants felt their relationship was with her rather than with the Board of Femco. Considerable conflict ensued as resolution of these issues was attempted. The decision-making process was described by Femco's workers as cumbersome and unwieldy, with the demands on their time being unrealistic and causing an inability to do the core work of the organisation effectively (Femco, minutes February 1994). Other tenants on the floor, most of whom were new to self-employment, required a considerable amount of administrative support, ranging from general typing work, and reception, to help with setting up systems. There were also demands with regards the shared portions of the accommodation. This involved the responsibility for the reception area, the meeting room and vacant accommodation. The vacant offices increased everyone's costs the longer they were unlet, so there was considerable pressure to find new tenants. However, new tenants had to be approved by all other tenants and their business compatible which decreased the number of suitable applicants. These issues had not been discussed in any detail either by the tenants or the Board of Femco and everyone involved was unprepared for the conflict that arose and the time needed to resolve the problems. The tenants were committed to a collective decision-making process. However, the understanding of what that meant in practice varied. With a large number of people (15 tenants) all with a variety of needs and differing expectations, it was unrealistic to expect all could be involved in the every-day decisions required to run the floor. This was however, what the women sought to achieve. Long meetings were held to gain in-put from all tenants but as the financial reality began to bite, the tolerance became less. The tenants began to look at ways to minimise costs and to delegate responsibility for a greater number of tasks among the themselves.

Femco was crucial to the smooth functioning of the floor at this point as they were responsible for the management of the floor, including the cleaning and reception contracts. Tensions

arose within Femco as the manager expected the labour pool and administration staff to accommodate the needs of the other tenants on the floor. The labour pool women did not feel particularly comfortable in the new surroundings and did not feel very welcome when they arrived in their working clothes. The premises were suitable for the business advisory service and administration, but not for the labour pool who had no storage for equipment, no parking for vehicles when they needed to call into the office and less meeting space. The decision to move to what were clearly unsuitable premises for the running of the whole organisation, was able to be made because by this time Femco was seeing itself as a professional women's organisation and was driven by the concerns of that sector. Few checks and balances were in place to arrest this process and the Board relied heavily on the advice of one person - the manager. By this time all channels for communication between the Board and other staff in the organisation had been closed.

*We called her our 'manager' but she didn't manage the labour pool. She left that to someone else and didn't see what was happening. The communication between our manager and the Board was very poor and I felt very let down when we found out all the things that were happening because we hadn't known what was going on and you can't function if you don't have good communication between your Board and manager.*

(Long standing Board Member)

#### 4.6 Financial Crisis

Concerns from the bank caused the agency to review the financial situation and to ask for an explanation from the manager. As she was unable to provide a satisfactory explanation or suggest a viable course of action, the Board ended their contract with her. Severe cost-cutting was required, and staff numbers were reduced drastically. The Board called in a consultant to undertake an independent analysis and provide recommendations for future action. The consultant's report noted the following:

*A major constraint affecting the labour pool is under capitalisation. Both the gardening and the painting teams require substantial equipment and a number of vehicles. It is clear that funding is necessary for the continuation of the social objectives/overheads of the labour pool. It is also a necessity in view of the present level of indebtedness. The Business*

*Advisory Service should continue on a contractual basis with a restructuring of costing and support services.*

*A mark of success of the labour pool, that is the 'graduation' of women into the mainstream workforce is the very factor which continually focuses the organisation on its goals - providing entry, training and experience for new women. At the same time, from a commercial point of view, it is what prevents the possibility of self-sufficiency. Femco is very fortunate to have the voluntary services of active Board members with experience in relevant areas* (Consultants report, March/April 1994).

The Board responded to the consultants report by deciding to vacate the new premises as soon as it was able, restructure the labour pool by ceasing to provide work and discontinue business advisory services at the end of the current contract. The Board revised the objectives of Femco and decided on a new direction. In future the agency would act as an intermediary between employers and women wanting work, instead of actually employing women in work teams. Femco would also provide support, information and advocacy for women in employment. This meant that the painting, cleaning, and gardening teams would cease when all contractual obligations were met. The Board made these decisions because of a serious financial crisis which threatened to close the organisation. The closure would have impacted heavily on the bank manager and the local authority officer on the Board in particular. It was also contrary to the wishes of other members of the Board who felt strongly that the organisation was still needed, and that a new service should be provided which reflected the needs of women in employment. It was fortunate that there were women on the Board who were in positions of power outside the organisation which could help to ensure the on-going viability of the organisation. It was also fortunate that the Board had a member who was prepared to risk her personal finance by acting as a guarantor for the continuation of Femco's overdraft, and a worker who loaned money to reduce the overdraft in the short term. These measures saved Femco from pressure from the bank to repay debts.

*The agency survived because of the tenacity of the Board members and because we believe in what we're doing.*

(Board Member)



Femco was also fortunate that the government field-worker who could provide funding for new projects understood the organisations desire to change, and develop. This understanding had been built up over a number of years and the woman held similar beliefs to the organisation and in fact was as committed to the goals of Femco as the organisation itself. The combination of these factors illustrates how the survival of organisations is often dependent on the power and influence of people associated with them rather than the success of their service delivery.

*I believed the organisation was totally committed and I had faith in the organisation and believed in what it was doing. If an organisation has that then it's worth backing. The Board stood behind the organisation. They had enough faith and power to stand behind it and carry it over and respond to the situation which you had, which was fairly difficult personally as well as with staff and the worry about the money. You happened to have the right people there on the Board and at the bank. And there was just enough guts on the Board to keep it going, it would have crumbled otherwise. It's about the people and the power but also about commitment and that goes back to that the Board all believe in it as well - the objectives and the need. Every community organisation has to have a champion or mentor who's in a position of both commitment to the objectives and has the power to make it happen - to stand behind it.*

(Field Worker)

## 5. CONCLUSION

Given the economic and political climate in which the agency was working, the need was to be more efficient and systematic than private-sector small businesses, but the reality was that the culture of the organisation and its philosophical base made this form of operation impossible. The reliance on government funding, with its sudden changes of direction, its year-by-year cycle and low level, also mitigated against the long-term employment of suitably qualified staff, as a consequence, Femco was constantly involved in training. The accumulation of years of deficit trading associated with these factors, culminated in a financial crisis in 1994 which resulted in the restructuring of the organisation. The survival of Femco after the restructuring was a result of the determination and commitment of the Board, the positions of

power of some of the Board members and the positive financial situation of others. It was also due to the support the organisation enjoyed from the field worker of its major funder.

Femco's ability to maintain a radical feminist focus in its activities decreased as its services increased. Organisations act in the world and are influenced by the economic and social conditions in which they operate. This case study has shown how difficult it is to retain philosophical objectives over a long period of time, particularly within a changing environment. The coincidence of a number of factors determines the direction and strategies employed by organisations and to a certain extent their success. Feminist organisations face a further dilemma in that they are attempting to model alternative practices and to challenge the accepted social order. Femco, by applying different strategies and responding to changing environments, albeit reluctantly at times, managed to withstand challenges to its continued existence and address some of the needs of women in employment. As one person noted Femco has attempted a variety of organisational styles and has recently re-established a more collective style of decision-making and accountability.

*Well that could be the secret as to why it has succeeded, because each time there's been a different environmental context or environmental change it actually required a different style of leadership.*

(Field Worker)

As another, much earlier commentator, observed:

*Change is not made without inconvenience, even from worse to better. Richard Hooker in the English Dictionary, Sixteenth Century* (Cited in Young, 1985).

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

This study has detailed the experiences of an organisation whose goal was to facilitate women's access to economic independence. Femco worked ambitiously in a difficult area, attempting to challenge both pay differentials and occupational segregation. The study has shown how difficult it is to address these two issues, which are nevertheless fundamental to women's economic independence. Femco attempted to create jobs for women in traditionally 'male' occupations by entering the commercial world of contracting. In addition, Femco was concerned with working from a feminist perspective which demanded a particular form of organisation and adherence to feminist principles of collectivity, consultation, non-hierarchical models of management and the need for social change. The women seeking work and training opportunities with Femco provided anecdotal evidence that not only do women face overt discrimination and sexism in some work places, but they are also confronted with low wages and inflexible working conditions. Women registering with Femco had an expectation that this women's organisation would be able to provide both supportive working conditions and higher wages.

Attempts by Femco to address these issues proved extremely challenging and the organisation itself produced contradictory outcomes. Femco, at times found itself delivering conflicting messages. On the one hand it encouraged women into non-traditional work. On the other, pressure to provide flexible, casual work led to it providing work for women in cleaning, the latter being the most profitable way the organisation could provide women with the flexible, casual work they were seeking. The demands on the organisation to provide services for a diverse client group of women seeking paid work, resulted in compromises that many in the organisation had difficulty reconciling. Femco's experience indicates that as an organisation moves into service provision for distinct groups of people tensions and conflicts can develop within the organisation. These conflicts often cannot be contained within the organisation and may threaten its continued existence. Femco's resilience was due to the over-riding belief in the organisation by many of those involved with it and to the dedication and commitment of

key individuals at times of crisis. These women were prepared to restructure the organisation and look at a variety of mechanisms to maintain an organisation which other women and labour market statistics told them was important for women's involvement in paid work.

Femco's attempts to be an exemplary employer had to be adjusted because of constraints in funding and consultative decision-making was abandoned for a time because of financial crises. The study shows very clearly the difficulty Femco confronted when attempting change while competing in the commercial arena, and receiving government funds to provide a particular service. These difficulties centred on the need to, on the one hand, provide a service people would pay for, and on the other, provide work for women disadvantaged in the labour market. In a changing economic environment which emphasised individual responsibility and competitiveness and reduced profit margins for many small operators, this became an impossible goal. This increased competition, in effect forced Femco to seek alternative funding to enable the organisation to continue providing work for its women clients. The irony was that this resulted in a greater dependence on government funding than was originally perceived by its founders who saw the labour pool as a way for the organisation to become *less* dependent on government programmes.

Femco, like many voluntary organisations, was aware of the problems associated with attempting to challenge government policies and programmes while being reliant on them for funding. Government employment policies, for example, had contradictory outcomes for women and Femco was interested in challenging those contradictions and not reproducing them. An increasing dependence on government funding muted that challenge over time. Femco in fact became a deliverer of government policy and a service provider, by entering into contractual obligations with the state. These contractual obligations became more closely defined and aligned to state policy as successive governments sought to reduce state involvement in a number of spheres and pursued policies of separating funding from service provision. Despite entering into such contracts with the state Femco was unable to maintain its presence in the private sector as other government policies were continually putting pressure on the profitability of small businesses operating in the local market. The loss of this aspect of Femco's work severely compromised its founding aims and objectives but was the only way the organisation could survive.

The use of government programmes by Femco to meet the needs of women required a high degree of analytical skill and forward planning. Such skills were not always available, given the voluntary nature of the Board of the organisation, and the insecurity of funding available for the employment of staff. The lack of these skills led Femco to make some questionable financial decisions and to the need to undertake radical restructuring on several occasions. The ability to undertake forward planning and act upon these decisions in a useful way became less over time. Such planning and assessment is, however, fundamental to the on-going success of many voluntary organisations, if they are to remain responsive to the needs of their client group and not become 'community bureaucracies'. The short term nature of government funding also mitigated against the thoughtful analysis of the environment which had occurred at the establishment of the organisation. The founders spent twenty months developing the labour pool which was its original aim, but the move into business advisory services happened within a few months, in response to government policy shifts for enterprise development. This illustrates the way in which government policy informed the decision making of the organisation. It is extremely difficult for organisations to remain unaffected by such policy shifts if they wish to survive.

Femco believed a women's enterprise agency could provide an avenue for some women to achieve economic independence and that it was providing services that were not available elsewhere and so it never seriously considered rejecting any funding that may be available to it, even when that funding produced contradictory outcomes. The Board members of Femco felt very strongly that the organisation should maintain a presence at all costs. At times the costs were indeed high as the organisation struggled with the compromises necessary when philosophy meets practice.

This case study illustrates the diversity of women and the problems of attempting to deliver services which will take into account equally all women's needs and aspirations. Femco found itself endeavouring to meet the needs of two particular groups of women. This resulted in conflicts within the organisation and between the different client groups. Within the two groups there was also diversity, again illustrating the difficulty of providing services which meet a variety of needs while adhering to a particular philosophy. The labour pool was made

up of women who wanted work in non-traditional trades areas and those who wanted flexible work to top up their benefits. Yet another group wanted part-time work as a way to re-enter the workforce and maintain their domestic responsibilities. The business advisory service provided advice to women wishing to enter self-employment and to those currently in business. This client group was further divided into those who needed self-employment as an income and those who wanted to add to other income. Taking into account all these needs was difficult but necessary if Femco was to be any different to the other organisations available to women seeking work, training or business services. It was also necessary if Femco was to adhere to its feminist principles of valuing women's contributions, remaining inclusive and responsive to a variety of women's needs.

Femco was different in that it was addressing the issues of women's lower pay (relative to men) and women's concentration in a narrower range of occupations than men. Attempting to do this within the private sector proved impossible as Femco's principles made it difficult for the organisation to charge the rates required for profitability while using unskilled or semi-skilled labour in areas considered non-traditional for women. Femco's experience with regards pay rates and occupational segregation, suggests that a positive action programme providing the necessary skills training, *on the job*, within a supportive environment would be necessary to allow women's advancement in these areas. Femco was able to provide a supportive environment, some skills training and initially above average pay rates. Eventually though this threatened the profitability of the organisation. A greater measure of intervention by the state in conjunction with community based women's organisations could deliver positive outcomes in the areas of pay, occupational segregation and supportive working conditions which would provide women with real choices for their economic independence.

The case study illustrates the need to accept the diversity of women while recognising the need to determine the level of service organisations wish to deliver to the different groups. This is a problem when the organisation is dependent on government funding as it is often the funder who will determine the client group and the outcomes. In reality Femco's structure and the way services were delivered meant that certain groups of women were particularly attracted to the organisation. Femco's inability to remain more independent was a direct result of the

tightening market in which it was operating, rising unemployment, the nature of its client group, and its desire to value women's work in monetary terms.

Femco's attempts to work in a flexible manner and to work in different ways also caused a clash of cultures and added to the already considerable pressures on the organisation. The study gives some insight into the issues of power and control within a voluntary feminist organisation. While the findings of this study cannot be directly generalised, common issues occur in the literature on both feminist and voluntary organisations. These issues are usually concerned with the need to adhere to particular philosophies while attempting to provide services, usually for a disadvantaged group. Clashes of culture, lack of funding, insufficient skill levels, and conflicts concerning roles and responsibilities, are all difficulties faced by many voluntary organisations. Femco was faced with a culture clash when it diversified its activities. The organisation faced conflicts which centred on the recognition of the respective value of the two groups. Within an organisation whose feminist philosophy emphasised equality, the demands of commercial activity saw the Board giving greater credence to a manager with financial skills, than the co-ordinator of the labour pool. This was manifest by asking for less documentation and accepting direction on financial matters with very little information.

I have argued that the political, economic and social environment within which Femco was operating was the determining factor in its decisions and choices of direction. Although the organisational structure and the personalities of those involved was important, they too were often shaped by the government policies within which the organisation operated, and the available funding for particular functions. The recruitment of women with particular skills or standing, to the Board of the organisation, was a response to the demands from government funded programmes. The result was a change in both the direction of the organisation and its feminist philosophy. The study also documents the difficulties organisations face when they are working within a changing political and economic environment. The change by the government from programme to project funding and from input accountability to outputs and outcomes, saw major shifts in Femco's functioning. Programme funding ensures continuity of funding for the core functions of an organisation, while project funding involves the 'buying' of particular services. Such services are judged by the achievement of specific, measurable,

outputs and desirable outcomes. In order to survive in the new environment Femco had to shift its priorities at various times. This was as a direct result of government requirements not necessarily of the requirements of women for whom the organisation was established.

The case study illustrates how the founding circumstances and founding members influence the direction and flavour of an organisation. This in turn, to a certain extent, dictates the primary users of a service. Successful partnerships with other similar agencies is necessary to broaden the service delivery.

Femco saw the need to build alliances across class and race boundaries, if its services were to be inclusive of all women. For many women the issues of equal employment opportunity and equal pay are liberal feminist causes which have at times been in conflict with their own interests. For example, jobs traditionally associated with females may be lost when they are in more direct competition with men (N.A.C.E.W., 1990; Hyman, 1994). Rates of unemployment for Maori and Pacific Island women have been consistently higher than those for Pakeha women in New Zealand (Department of Statistics, 1990; Statistics New Zealand, 1993; 1994a). There has been, therefore, considerable suspicion when other groups or individuals have attempted to work for, or with these groups. Femco did not satisfactorily address these issues until real power-sharing and sharing of resources with Maori women was attempted through a joint programme, involving the sharing of a successful government tender.

The dangers of allowing the power within the organisation to lie too heavily with paid staff is also illustrated by this study. The financial and philosophical consequences of such a situation for the organisation were to severely threaten its continued existence. This study indicates the importance of thoughtful and frequent planning, security of funding, committed management and the support of those in positions of power and authority outside the organisation.

Over the last 10 years women's roles have changed with respect to paid employment and business formation. There has been an increase in the female proportion of the employed labour force, and a dramatic rise in the number of women who are self-employed. These



changes have resulted in a greater acceptance of women as a permanent feature of the paid labour force. Little has changed, however, with regards to women's responsibility for unpaid caring work in the home, nor in the recognition by employers of the skills acquired through this work (Ministry of Women's Affairs, 1993). Women's work is still underpaid, unseen and undervalued. The dual responsibility for paid and unpaid work still falls more heavily on most women than men (Habgood, 1992; Statistics New Zealand, 1993; Hyman, 1994; Edwards and Magarey, 1995). Feminists have argued that these dual responsibilities lead to the secondary economic status of most women. Economic independence was the goal of both Femco and the individual women who sought its assistance. The dual responsibilities of most women made this goal difficult to attain for both Femco and many of its women clients. Flexibility in the labour market does not necessarily mean fitting in with women's needs and even Femco was finally unable to deliver flexibility in this sense while competing in the commercial arena. Femco itself was unable to generate sufficient income from sources other than public funds, to enable the organisation to deliver as much 'flexibility' as its philosophy suggested it would have liked.

Government policies over the last ten years have produced contradictory outcomes for women in the workforce. Equal employment opportunity policies and positive action programmes may have assisted some women to gain skills and experience which have enabled them to achieve well paid positions within state bureaucracies and private sector organisations (N.A.C.E.W., 1990; Korndorffer, 1992). Training programmes and government grants and subsidies may have encouraged more women into self-employment (Ministry of Women's Affairs, 1989; 1991; 1992; Statistics New Zealand, 1993; Boswell et al, 1994). The Employment Contracts Act may have been a factor in the increase in part-time work which enables women to combine household responsibilities with paid employment (Davidson and Bray, 1994). However, the introduction of a goods and services tax decreased some families discretionary income and was felt particularly by those on low incomes, many of whom are women (Hyman, 1994). Reductions in benefits and child-care subsidies made the upgrading of skills and greater participation in the paid workforce for many women difficult, as they are more likely to have the major responsibility for the day-to-day care of children (Davidson and Bray, 1994 Hyman, 1994). The loss of bargaining power with the cessation of the national award system impacted heavily on women who work in small unprotected work places.

Isolation in the workforce can mean less access to resources and limited bargaining power (Sayers, 1992).

These government policies whilst producing unintended consequences, were designed to advance what has been referred to as 'new-right' economic and political agendas which privilege individualism and market forces (Bunkle and Lynch, 1992; Else, 1992; Olsson and Bunkle, 1992). Espousing individual responsibility in the work force did not, however, carry over into social or family policy where individuals are expected to act in the collective interests of family members and to look after those not catered for by the market. For most families this means a continued reliance on women for care-giving.

The experiences of some women's attempts to become more economically independent as discussed through this case study of a women's enterprise agency are discouraging, if they are measured against formal economic indicators. The attempts by Femco itself to become less dependent on government funding and to create enterprises which would employ women in a women-centred environment are also far from encouraging. However, the survival of Femco for almost ten years and its ability to change and adapt to rapidly changing environments does illustrate the potential for more positive outcomes in the future. The increasing numbers of women in the workforce and their increasing contribution to the family income suggests they are now a permanent feature of the labour market. In addition, many 'traditionally female' attributes have now been incorporated into mainstream management and business practice (Handy, 1989; Roddick, 1991; Peters, 1992). Skills such as communication, conflict resolution, people skills and consultative management styles are vital for human resource management. As more women turn to running their own enterprises, the value of such skills, often acquired through involvement in unpaid caring work, will become evident in the success of their ventures.

Organisations such as Femco need to form alliances with other community based organisations across race and class lines and combine their energies and enterprising activities to achieve a successful challenge to male dominance in paid work. The diversity of women and women's experiences requires a greater number of responses and Femco's experience indicates that this can best be met by partnerships with other organisations which acknowledge, value and respect

such diversity. As a way to assist more women to develop and maintain their own styles of creating and managing organisations, Pringle and Henry have identified the need for more studies on the 'range of diversity of being women as it is manifest in organisations that women have created' (Pringle and Henry, 1993). The collective strength of women's organisations could then be used to utilise scarce resources more effectively. Jeanette Fitzsimons has also expressed the need for collective solutions:

*Whether the issue is nuclear war or ozone thinning or climate change, we sink or swim collectively. There are no individual solutions* (Fitzsimons, 1994).

Equal Employment Opportunity policies and programmes have enabled more women to gain positions of power, particularly in the public sector. If these women are encouraged to form alliances with groups such as Femco, then their power and influence could facilitate the growth and development of voluntary feminist organisations.

*So we are not alone in seeing the need for change. We may be alone in making it. For the sake of our earth and ourselves, we must. What men value has brought us to the brink of death: What women find worthy may bring us back to life* (Waring, 1988: 255).

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

*I have made extensive use of the minutes, reports and submissions of [Femco] in this thesis. These sources cannot be referenced here in the bibliography due to the confidential nature of the material, as outlined in the Information sheet (Appendix A).*

Aburdene, P., and Naisbitt, J. (1993) *Mega trends for Women*, London, Random House.

Acker, J. (1990) Hierarchies, Jobs, Bodies: A Theory of Gendered Organisation, *Gender and Society*, 4 (2): 139-158.

Acker, J. (1992) Gendering organisational theory, in *Gendering Organisational Analysis*, Mills, A., and Tancred, P (eds.) California, Sage Publications.

Acker, J., Barry, K., and Esseveld, J. (1983) Objectivity and Truth: Problems in Doing Feminist Research, *Women's Studies International Forum*, 6 (4 ): 423-435.

Adkins, L. (1995) *Gendered Work. Sexuality, Family and the Labour Market*, Buckingham, Open University Press.

Armstrong, N. (1992) Handling the Hydra: Feminist Analyses of the State, in Du Plessis, R. (ed.) *Feminist Voices*, Auckland, Oxford University Press.

Baddon, L. (1992) What does overseas experience offer? *Forum on Local Government Employment Initiatives*, Wellington, Local Government Association.

Baker, A. (1982) The Problem of Authority in Radical Movement Groups: A Case Study of Lesbian-Feminist Organizations, *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 18 (3): 323-341.

Barron, R., and Norris, G.(1976) Sexual divisions in the labour market, in Allen, S., and Leonard (eds.) *Dependence and Exploitation in Work and Marriage*, London, Longman.

Baynes, S. (1995) Jeanette McKerchar: Sounding Off! *Broadsheet*, 205: 17.

Beaglehole, A. (1993) *Income Support for Women, 1893-1993*, Wellington, Social Policy Agency.

- Beechey, V. ( 1978) Women and production: A critical analysis of some sociological theories of women's work, in Kuhn, A., and Wolpe, A (eds.) ***Feminism and Materialism: Women and Modes of Production***, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Beechey, V. (1982) Some notes on female wage labour in capitalist production, in Evans, M (ed.) ***The Woman Question: Readings on the Subordination of Women***, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Beechey, V. ( 1987) ***Unequal Work***, London, Verso.
- Bell,C., and Roberts, H. (eds.) (1984) ***Social Research***, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Birks, S and Chatterjee, S (eds.) (1992). ***The New Zealand Economy: Issues and Policies***, Palmerston North, The Dunmore Press Ltd.
- Blumberg, R (ed.) (1991). ***Gender, Family, and Economy. The Triple Overlap***, California, Sage.
- Bogdan, C., and Biklen, S. (1992) ***Qualitative Research for Education*** (second edition), Boston, Allyn and Bacon.
- Bollard, A. (1988) ***Small Business in New Zealand***, New Zealand, Allen and Unwin/Port Nicholson Press.
- Booker, M. (1995) The dollar v the heart: ....does big business have a role in charity? ***The Independent***, 28 July.
- Boston, J. (1987) Wages Policy and Industrial Relations Reform, in Boston, J., and Holland, M. ***The Fourth Labour Government: Radical Politics in New Zealand***, Auckland, Oxford University Press.
- Boston, J. (1992) Redesigning New Zealand's Welfare State, in Boston, J., and Dalziel, P. ***A Decent Society?*** Auckland, Oxford University Press.
- Boston, J., and Dalziel, P. (1992) ***A Decent Society?*** Auckland, Oxford University Press.
- Boston, J., and Holland, M (eds.) (1987).***The Fourth Labour Government: Radical Politics in New Zealand***, Auckland, Oxford University Press.
- Boswell, K., and Brown, D. (1990) Community Level Initiatives To Promote Enterprise And Employment, ***New Zealand Planning Council Seminar***, Wellington, 29 March 1990.

- Boswell, K., Brown, D., Maniapoto, J., and Kruger, T. (1994) *Grassroots II: Community Development Initiatives at the Grassroots*, Wellington, MAF Policy Technical Paper 94 /10.
- Bowen, D., and Hisrich, R. (1986) The Female Entrepreneur: A Career Development Perspective. *Academy of Management*, 11 (2): 393-407.
- Bowles, G., and Klein, D. (eds.) (1983) *Theories of Women's Studies.*, London, Routledge.
- Braverman, H. (1974) *Labour and Monopoly Capital*, New York, Monthly Review Press.
- Briar, C. (1992) Women's Economic Dependence and Social Policy, in Briar C., Munford, R., and Nash, M. (eds.) *Superwoman Where Are You? Social Policy and Women's Experience*, Palmerston North, The Dunmore Press.
- Briar, C., Munford, R., and Nash, M (eds.) (1992) *Superwoman Where Are You?* Palmerston North: The Dunmore Press.
- Broadsheet (1986-1991) *Resouce Kit : Women In Non-Traditional Roles*, Auckland Womanfile Incorporated.
- Bruegel, I. (1982) Women as a reserve army of labour: A note on the recent British experience, in Whitelegg E. et al. (eds.) *The Changing Experience of Women*, Oxford, Martin Robertson.
- Bruegel, I. (1986) *The reserve army of Labour 1974-1979*, in Feminist Review (ed.) Waged Work: A Reader, London, Virago.
- Brush, C. (1988) Women Entrepreneurs: Strategic Origins Impact on Growth. in Kirchhoff, B., et al. (eds) *Frontiers of Entrepreneurship Research*, Wellesley, Massachusetts, Centre for Entrepreneurial Studies, Babson College.
- Budget '85 Task Force (1985) *Benefits, Taxes and the 1985 Budget*, Wellington, Budget '85 Task Force.
- Bunkle, P., and Lynch, J. (1992) What's Wrong with the New Right? in Briar C., Munford, R., and Nash, M.(eds.) *Superwoman Where Are You? Social Policy and Women's Experience*, Palmerston North, The Dunmore Press.

- Burke, K. (1985) *A New Deal In Training And Employment Opportunities*, Wellington, Government Printer.
- Business Grow. (1995) *Monthly Report, January*, Unpublished.
- Butler, R., and Wilson, D. (1990) *Managing Voluntary and Non-profit Organisations*, London, Routledge.
- Cahill, M., and Dann, C., (eds.) (1991) *Changing Our Lives: Women Working in the Women's Liberation Movement 1970-1990*, Wellington, Bridget Williams Books.
- Callister, P. (1989) *What Creates New Jobs?* New Zealand Planning Council, Wellington.
- Cameron, S. (1992) *A Situational Description and Analysis Of Business Grow*, Massey, Unpublished M. B.A. Paper.
- Campbell, G. (1988) Marketing the Ministry, *New Zealand Listener*, (August 6).
- Campbell, J. (1992) Beyond the Organistion: Women Entrepreneurs, in Olsson, S. (ed.) *The Gender Factor*, Palmerston North, The Dunmore Press.
- Canterbury Development Group and the Canterbury Employers' Chamber of Commerce. (undated) *Small Business Directory*, Christchurch.
- Canterbury United Council. (1985) *Job Sharing Kit*, Christchurch, Canterbury United Council.
- Canterbury Women's Employment Trust, (1985a) *Submission For Employment Summit*, Unpublished.
- Canterbury Women's Employment Trust. (1985b). *Benefits, Taxes and the 1985 Budget: A Submission*, Unpublished.
- Carter, S., and Cannon, T. (1988) *Women in Business*, Stirling, University of Stirling.
- Caygill, D. (1987) *Improving the Environment For Business: The Labour Government's policies for the business sector*, Wellington, New Zealand Government.
- Chaganti, R. (1986) Management in Women Owned Enterprises, *Journal of Small Business Management*. (Oct): 18-29.

- Christchurch City Council. (1989) Economic Development and Employment Promotion in Christchurch, *Christchurch City Council Technical Report*; 89 /1.
- Christchurch Society For Research on Women, (1984) *Review of Employment Subsidy Programmes - A Submission*, Unpublished.
- Christchurch Women and Economics Group, (1985) *Submission To The Budget '85 Task Force*, Unpublished.
- Churchman, J. (1989) Working Women Get Together, *Broadsheet*, April 1989:5.
- Cockburn, C. (1991) *In the Way of Women: Men's Resistance to Sex Equality in Organizations*, Basingstoke, Macmillan Education Ltd.
- Colwill, N. (1982) *The New Partnership Women and Men in Organisation*, California,
- Combined Groups and Organisations in the Region of Christchurch (1984) *Submission to the New Zealand Government On: "A Review of Employment Subsidy Programmes: A Framework for Consultation"*, Unpublished.
- Community Employment Initiatives Group (1995-19 96) *Minutes* ( November-February).
- Community Employment Resource Centre (1988-1990) *Minutes*.
- Coopers and Lybrand (1993) *Factors Affecting the Supply of Capital for Small Company Growth*, Coopers and Lybrand.
- Cordeiro, S. (1994) Young Business Women on the Move, *Asia Pacific Newsletter*, 5 (1): 1,11.
- Cox, S. (ed.) (1987) *Public and Private Worlds: Women in Contemporary New Zealand*. Wellington, Allen and Unwin.
- Cronin, M., and Di Matteo, S. (1988) *Women's economic development as an emerging movement: Strategies for improving women's economic position*, U.S.A. Centre for Management and Community Development, Tufts University.
- Cull, M. (1992) Exploitation of Empowerment? Women Workers in Voluntary Welfare Organisations, in *The Gender Factor*, Palmerston North, The Dunmore Press.



- Dalziel, P. (1986) *A Study of the Employment Assistance Package For Disadvantaged Groups*, Unpublished.
- Davidson, C., and Bray, M. (1994) *Women and Part Time Work in New Zealand*, Christchurch, The New Zealand Institute for Social Research and Development, SR&D.
- Department Of Labour (1977-1984) *Half-yearly Surveys*, Wellington, Department of Labour.
- Department of Internal Affairs (1991) *An Evaluation of the Alternative Employment Programme*, Wellington, Research Unit Department of Internal Affairs.
- Department of Statistics, and Ministry of Women's Affairs (1990) *Women in New Zealand*, Wellington, Department of Statistics and Ministry of Women's Affairs.
- Department of Statistics (1993) *New Zealand Official Yearbook*, Wellington, Department of Statistics.
- Department of Statistics (1995) *New Zealand Official Yearbook*, Wellington, Department of Statistics.
- Department of Statistics (1993) *Labour Market 1992*, Wellington, Department of Statistics.
- Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. (1985) Strategies for Employers for Supporting Female Apprentices in Non-Traditional Trades, *Affirmative Action Issues Paper No. 1*. Australia. Affirmative Action Resource Unit.
- Devlin, M. (1977) *Needs and Problems of Small Businesses - Some Research Findings*, Massey University, Department of Business Studies, Occasional Paper No. 15.
- Devlin, M (1984) *The Small Business Sector in New Zealand: An Introductory Perspective*, Wellington, Development Finance Corporation.
- Dixon, S. (1986) Collective Bargaining and the Structure of Part-Time Employment: A Case Study, in *Women's Studies Conference Papers 1986* : 61-76. Women's Studies Association, Auckland.
- Doeringer, P., and Piore, M. (1971) *Internal Labour Markets and Manpower Analysis*, Lexington, Lexington Books.

- Donovan, D. 1993) *The Economic Impacts of Community Development: A Literature Review*, Wellington, Policy Research Section Department of Internal Affairs.
- Donovan, F. (1977) *Voluntary Organisations: A Case Study*, Bundoora Australia, Preston Institute of Technology.
- Douglas, R. (1985) *Statement on Taxation and Benefit Reform 1985*, Wellington, Government Printer.
- Du Bois, B. (1983) Passionate Scholarship: Notes On Values, knowing and Method in Feminist Social Science, in Bowles, G., and Klein, R. (eds.) *Theories of Women's Studies*. London: Routledge.
- Du Plessis, R. (1992) Stating the Contradictions: The Case of Women's Employment, in Du Plessis, R. (ed.) *Feminist Voices*, Auckland, Oxford University Press.
- Dwyer, M., Rose, D., Sowman, R. (1985) *Self-Employment and Small Business*, Wellington, New Zealand Planning Council.
- Easton, B. (1987) Labour's Economic Strategy, in Boston, J., and Holland, M. *The Fourth Labour Government: Radical Politics in New Zealand*, Auckland, Oxford University Press.
- Echols, A. (1989) *Daring to be Bad: Radical Feminism in America 1967-75*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press.
- Economic Monitoring Group. (1989) *The Economy in Transition: Restructuring to 1989*, New Zealand Planning Council, Wellington.
- Edwards, A., and Magarey, S. (eds.) (1995) *Women in a Restructuring Australian: Work and Welfare*, Australia, Allen and Unwin.
- Edwards, G. (1986) *Record of the Community /Inter-departmental Forum held in the Stringleman Room*, Christchurch Public Library, 28 October. Unpublished.
- Else, A. (1992) To Market and Home Again: Gender and the New Right, in Du Plessis, R. (ed.) *Feminist Voices*, Auckland, Oxford University Press.
- Else, A. (ed.) (1993) *Women Together: A history of women's Organisations in New Zealand*, Wellington, Daphne Brassell Associates.

- Employment Advisory Group - Canterbury United Council (1983) *Facing the Facts - Employment and Canterbury's Future*, Canterbury United Council, Christchurch.
- Employment Network (1988) *Submission to the Royal Commission on Social Policy*, Unpublished.
- Employment Promotion Conference (1985) *Conference Report*, Wellington, Government Printer.
- Eviota, E. (1992) *The Political Economy of Gender: Women and the Sexual Division of Labour in the Philippines*, London, Zed Books Ltd.
- Firth-Cozens, J., and West, M (eds.) (1990) *Women at Work*, Great Britain, Open University Press.
- Firth-Cozens, J., and West, M. (1991) *Women at Work: Psychological and Organisational Perspectives*. Milton Keynes, Philadelphia, Open University Press.
- Fitzgerald, G., et al (1987) *Employment in Christchurch: Directions and Opportunities*, Christchurch, Canterbury Women's Employment Trust and the Social Science Unit D.S.I.R.
- Fitzsimons, J. (1994) Red-Greens and Blue-Greens: freedom, markets, the individual and the state in a sustainable economy, *Greenweb* (August, 1994): 22-24.
- Fonow, M., and Cook, J. (1991) *Beyond Methodology : Feminist Scholarship as Lived Research*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Foulkes, A. (1993) *Women and the Economy*, Address to the 1993 Auckland Institute and Museum Lecture Series, Auckland, October 1993.
- Francis, J. (1990/91) *Role of Local Authorities in Economic Development*, Christchurch, Unpublished.
- Franzway, S., Court, D., and Connell, R. (1989) *Staking a Claim: Feminism, Bureaucracy and the State*, Sydney, Allen and Unwin.
- Freeman, J. (1973) The Tyranny of Structurelessness. *Berkley Journal of Sociology*, 17: 151-166.

- Fry, M. (1995) Sewing with Metal: What's The Difference Between Sheetmetal Engineering And Sewing? *Broadsheet*: 205: 16.
- Gasson, W (1987) Getting Started, *Better Business*, October, 1987: 22-24.
- Goffee, R., and Scase, R. (1985) *Women in Charge: The Experiences of Female Entrepreneurs*. London, Allen and Unwin.
- Goulter, J. (1995) Just Do It and Learn Along the Way, *N.Z. Business* March: 14-21.
- Graduate School of Business and Government Management (1991) *Partnership and Enterprise - Putting Porter into Practice*, Wellington, Victoria University .
- Grant, J. (1993) *Fundamental Feminism*, Routledge, New York and London.
- Gray, A. (1993) *Women Establishing Businesses: Barriers and Solutions*, Wellington, N.Z. Ministry of Commerce.
- Gregory , B. (1987) The Reorganisation of the Public Sector: The Quest for Efficiency, in Boston, J., and Holland, M. *The Fourth Labour Government: Radical Politics in New Zealand*, Auckland, Oxford University Press.
- Gummesson, E., (1991) *Qualitative Methods in Management Research*, California, Sage
- Habgood, R. (1992) On His Terms: Gender and the Politics of Domestic Life, in Du Plessis, R. (ed.) *Feminist Voices*, Auckland, Oxford University Press.
- Hacker, S., and Elcorobairutia, C. (1987) Women workers in the Mondragon System of Industrial Co-operatives, *Gender and Society*, 1(4): 358-379.
- Haines, L. (1989) *Work Today: Employment Trends to 1989*, Wellington , New Zealand Planning Council.
- Haines, L. (1991) *Small Business is Big Business: A Review of Trends and Policies*, Wellington, New Zealand Planning Council.
- Handy, C. (1988) *Understanding Voluntary Organisations*, England, Penguin Books Ltd.
- Handy. C. (1989) *The Age of Unreason*, London, Hutchinson Business.

- Hansen, P. (1987) *Women's Employment Issues New Zealand 1967-1987: An Account of the Activities and Issues Addressed by the National Advisory Council on the Employment of Women*, Wellington, Department of Labour.
- Harding, S. (1987) *Feminism and Methodology Social Science Issues*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Hardy, L. (1982) Co-ops Are Working, *Broadsheet*, April 1982: 14-21.
- Hartmann, H. (1979) Capitalism, Patriarchy and Job Segregation by Sex, in Eisenstein, Z. (ed.) *Capitalist, Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism*, New York, Monthly Review Press.
- Hartmann, H. (1981) The Unhappy marriage of Marxism and feminism: Towards a more progressive union, in Sargent, L (ed) *The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: A Debate on Class and Patriarchy*, London, Pluto.
- Hawkesworth, M. (1989) Knowers, Knowing, Known: Feminist Theory and Claims of Truth, *Signs*, 14(3): 533-557.
- Hearn, J., and Parkin, W. (1987) *'Sex' at 'Work' The power and Paradox of Organisation Sexuality*, New York, St. Martin's Press.
- Hisrich, R., and Brush, C. (1987) Women Entrepreneurs: A Longitudinal Study, in Churchill, N., et al. (eds.) *Frontiers of Entrepreneurship Research*, Wellesley, Massachusetts, Babson College.
- Hyman, P. (1992) The Use of Economic Orthodoxy to Justify Inequality: A Feminist Critique, in Du Plessis, R. (ed.) *Feminist Voices*, Auckland, Oxford University Press.
- Hyman, P. (1994) *Women and Economics A New Zealand Feminist Perspective*, Bridget Williams Books, Wellington.
- Jackson, G. (1985) Widening women's work horizon, *Christchurch Shopping Guide*, Christchurch.
- Jagar, M., and Rothenberg Struhl, P. (eds.) (1978) *Feminist Frameworks*, New York, McGraw Hill.

- James, B., and Saville-Smith, K. (1989) *Gender, Culture and Power*, Auckland, Oxford University Press.
- James, B., and Saville-Smith, K. (1992a) Feminist Perspectives on Complex Organisations, in Olsson, S. *The Gender Factor*, Palmerston North, The Dunmore Press.
- James, B., and Saville-Smith, K. (1992b) The 'Invisible Woman' in Organisational Theory, in *The Gender Factor*, Palmerston North, The Dunmore Press.
- Jenkins, S. (ed.) Women and Finance: Suffrage year special, *Prometheus Foundation Newsletter* 10 (August 1993), Napier, Prometheus.
- Jesson, B. (1987) *Behind The Mirror Glass: The growth of wealth and power in New Zealand in the eighties*, Auckland, (Penguin Books (N.Z) Ltd.
- Jesson, B: Ryan, A: Spoonley, P. (1988) *Revival of the Right. New Zealand Politics in the 1980's*, Auckland, Heinemann Reed.
- Keller, E. (1982) Feminism and Science, *Signs*, 7 (3): 589-602.
- Keller, J. (1990) *A review of the Job Opportunity Scheme, Self-Employment Option*, Unpublished.
- Kelsey, J. (1993) *Rolling Back the State*, Wellington, Bridget Williams Books Ltd.
- Kennedy, G. (1995) More Pacific Islanders beat the dole stats to turn entrepreneur, *The National Business Review*, 18 August: 36.
- Keown, A., and Keown C. (1985) Factors of Success for Women in Business, *International Journal of Women's Studies*, 8 (3): 278-285.
- Klein, R. (1983 ) How To Do What We Want To Do: Thoughts About Feminist Methodology. in Bowles, G., and Klein, R (eds.) *Theories of Women's Studies*. London, Routledge.
- Kolodny, A (1988) *Dancing between Left and Right : Feminism and the Academic Minefield in the 1980's*, Feminist Studies, 14 (3).
- Koopman-Boyden, P., and Scott, C. (1984) *The Family and Government Policy in New Zealand*, Australia, Allen and Unwin.

- Korndorffer, W (1992) Look Like a Lady, Act Like a Man, Work Like a Dog: Senior Women and Equal Employment Opportunities at Victoria University of Wellington, in Olsson, S. (ed.) *The Gender Factor*, Palmerston North, The Dunmore Press.
- Kuhn, A., and Wolpe, A. (1978) *Feminism and Materialism*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Kuiper, A. (1986) If you think you can do it, Go for it: Women in Apprenticeships, *Women's Studies Conference Papers 1986*, Auckland, Women's Studies Association (N.Z.) Inc.
- Lee-Gosselin, H., and Grise, J. (1990) Are women owner-managers challenging our definitions of Entrepreneurship? An in-depth survey, *Journal of Business Ethics*, 9 (4 and5): 423-433.
- Leidner, R. (1991) Stretching the Boundaries of Liberalism: Democratic Innovation in a Feminist Organisation, *Signs*, 16 (2).
- Leith, J. (1986) *Research on the Vocational Training Needs Of Women in the Nelson Area*, Women in Nelson Inc, Nelson.
- Lloyd, V. (1993a) *Where Can I Find It? A Resource Guide to Assist Women with Business in New Zealand*, Auckland, Business Development Board.
- Lloyd, V. (1993b) *Your Business Development Board, Business Development Grant Scheme approvals, 1 July 1992- 30 March 1993*, Unpublished.
- Local Government Association (ed.) (1992) *Forum on Local Government Employment Initiatives*, Wellington, New Zealand Local Government Association.
- Loscocco, K., and Robinson, J. (1991) Barriers to Women's Small Business Success in the United States, *Gender and Society*, 5 (4).
- MacDiarmid, J., and Thomson, L. (1991) *The Report of the 'Hub' Women in Business Project*, Melbourne, Economic and Employment Branch, City of Melbourne.
- MacGibbon, L. (1995) Wahine Tu Kaha, *Christchurch City Council Employment Services Unit : Monitoring Report*, Unpublished.

- Mann, D. (1993) *Diversity and Similarity of Feminist Organisations: Implications for gendering organisational Theory*, Masters Thesis Department of Management Studies and Labour Relations, University of Auckland, Unpublished.
- Marshall, J. (1984) *Women Managers Travellers in a Male World*, Chichester, U.K., Wiley.
- Marshall, S. (1994) *Industrial Relations in Tomorrow's Business Environment, Speech to the Bank of New Zealand, Canterbury Employers' Chamber of Commerce and Canterbury Development Corporation Seminar*, Christchurch, Unpublished.
- Martin, J., Pere, V., Cameron, S., and Lowe, K. (1992) *A Study of Career Patterns of Business Women in Christchurch New Zealand*, Massey University Research Report, Unpublished.
- Martin, P. (1990) Rethinking Feminist Organisations, *Gender and Society*, 4 (2): 182-206.
- Masters, R., and Meier, R. (1988). Sex Differences and Risk Taking Propensity of Entrepreneurs, *Journal of Small Business Management*, 26 (1): 31-35.
- Mc Dermott, M.(1992) *An Employment and Economic Strategy for Christchurch City A Review for Christchurch City Council*, Auckland, McDermott Miller Group Ltd.
- Mc Manus, G. (1995) Flying On a Cloud, *N.Z. Business*, March: 30-35.
- Mies, M. (1983) Towards a Methodology for Feminist Research in Bowles, G., and Klein, R (eds.), *Theories of Women's Studies*, London, Routledge.
- Mies, M. (1986) *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale*, London, Zed.
- Mies, M. (1991) Women's Research or Feminist Research? The Debate Surrounding Feminist Science and Methodology, in Fonow, M., and Cook, J. (eds.) *Beyond Methodology: Feminist Scholarship As Lived Research*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press.
- Minister of Women's Affairs (1985) *The 1984 Women's Forums: Policy Priorities*, Wellington, Office of the Minister of Women's Affairs.



- Minister of Women's Affairs (1986) *The Mid-Term Progress Report on the Implementation of Labour's Programme of Equality For Women*, Wellington, Ministry of Women's Affairs.
- Ministry of Women's Affairs, Te Ohu Whakatupu (1989) *Maori Women Mean Business, He Wananga*, Auckland, Ministry of Women's Affairs.
- Ministry of Women's Affairs, Te Ohu Whakatupu (1990a) *Business Money and Maori Women, He Wananga*, Auckland, Ministry of Women's Affairs.
- Ministry of Women's Affairs (1990b) *Valuing Women's Unpaid Work: Discussion Paper*, Wellington, Ministry of Women's Affairs.
- Ministry of Women's Affairs (1990 c) *Synopsis of Valuing Women's Unpaid Work Project 1989/90*. Wellington, Ministry of Women's Affairs.
- Ministry of Women's Affairs (1991) *The Role of Small Business in the New Zealand Economy*, Wellington, Ministry of Women's Affairs.
- Ministry of Women's Affairs (1992) *Status of New Zealand Women 1992*, Wellington, Ministry of Women's Affairs.
- Ministry of Women's Affairs, Te Ohu Whakatupu (1993a) *Enterprise Assistance And Maori Women*, Wellington, Ministry of Women's Affairs.
- Ministry of Women's Affairs (1993b) *Make Your Workplace 'Family Friendly'* Wellington,
- Moore, D. (1990) *An Examination of present research on the female Entrepreneur - suggested research strategies for the 1990's*, Journal of Business Ethics, 9 (4 /5).
- Moore, M. (1993) *Lets Get New Zealand Working Again: Labour's Plan For Jobs*, Wellington, New Zealand Labour Party.
- Moore, M.(ed.) (1993) *N.Z. A Nation that can Work Again*, Wellington, M.M.S.C..
- Moorman, B. (1982) *Upgrading Part-Time Work: Why Unions Should Support Voluntary Job Sharing*, San Francisco, New Ways To Work.
- Moreland, K. (1994) *Women in Non-Traditional Occupations*, unpublished.

- Munn, S. (1990) *A Review of Economic and Employment Growth in Christchurch: The Role of the Christchurch City Council*, Christchurch, Christchurch City Council.
- National Advisory Council on the Employment of Women (1990) *Beyond the Barriers: The State, The Economy and Women's Employment 1984-1990*, Wellington, N.A.C.E.W.
- National Advisory Council on the Employment of Women (1993) *Te Wahine Hanga Mahi: Women and Self Employment*, Wellington, N.A.C.E.W.
- N.S.W. Department of Industrial Relation, Women's Directorate (1986) *Report on the Apprenticeship Programme for Girls 1978-1984 and The Way Ahead 1985*, N.S.W. Department of Industrial Relations.,
- Neuman, W. (1994) *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches* (2nd edition.), Boston, Allyn and Bacon.
- New Zealand Business Roundtable (1993) *Towards an Enterprise Culture*, Wellington, New Zealand Business Roundtable.
- New Zealand Employers' Federation (1994) *Submission to the Prime Ministerial Task Force on Employment*, Wellington, New Zealand Employer's Federation.
- New Zealand Government (1984) *A Review Of Employment Subsidy Programmes: A Framework For Consultation*, Wellington, Government Printer.
- New Zealand Labour Party (1993) *Let's Get New Zealand Working Again - Labour's Plan For Jobs*.
- New Zealand Local Government Association Inc. (1994) *Submission to the Task Force on Employment Policy*, Unpublished.
- Nightingale, M. (1995) Women and a Flexible Workforce, in *Women in a Restructuring Australian: Work and Welfare*, Australia, Allen and Unwin.
- Novitz, R. (1981) Women in Non-Traditional Jobs, *Women's Studies Conference Papers*, New Zealand, Women's Studies Association N. Z. Inc.
- Novitz, R. (1987) Bridging the Gap: Paid and Unpaid Work, in Cox, S. (ed.) *Public and Private Worlds*, Wellington, Allen and Unwin/Port Nicholson Press.

- O'Regan, M., and Varnham, M. (1992) Daring or Deluded: A Case Study in Feminist Management, in Du Plessis, R. (ed.) *Feminist Voices*, Auckland University Press.
- Oakley, A. (1981) Interviewing women: a contradiction in terms, in Roberts, H. (ed.) *Doing Feminist Research*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Oakley, A. (1974) *The Sociology of Housework*, United Kingdom, Martin Robertson.
- Olsson, S. (ed.) (1992) *The Gender Factor: Women in New Zealand Organisations*, Palmerston North, The Dunmore Press.
- Olsson, S., and Bunkle, P. (1992) Women and Organisations, in Olsson, S. (ed.) *The Gender Factor:: Women in New Zealand Organisations*, Palmerston North, The Dunmore Press.
- Pacific Island Employment Development Board. (undated) *Pacific Island Employment Development Scheme*, Wellington, Pacific Island Employment Development Board. Palmerston North, The Dunmore Press.
- Peters, T. (1992) *Liberation Management*, London, Macmillan Ltd.
- Phillips, J. (1990) *When Women Mean Business: A Guide For Women To Getting Started*, Auckland Penguin Books (N.Z.) Ltd.
- Pocock, B. (1995) Women's Work and Wages, in *Women in a Restructuring Australian: Work and Welfare*, Australia, Allen and Unwin.
- Prime Ministerial Task Force on Employment (1994) *Employment: Addressing New Zealand's biggest challenge, He Puanga Mahi Rau : Proposals for Action*, Wellington, Prime Ministerial Task Force on Employment.
- Prime Ministerial Task Force on Employment (1994) *Employment: The Issues*, Wellington, Prime Ministerial Task Force on Employment.
- Prime Ministerial Task Force on Employment (1994) *Employment: Understanding New Zealand's biggest challenge, Te Rongo Tangata: Summary of consultations*, Wellington, Prime Ministerial Task Force on Employment.
- Pringle, J. (1992) Survival or Success? Ways of 'Being' for Women in Organisations, in Olsson, S. (ed.) *The Gender Factor*, Palmerston North, The Dunmore Press.

- Pringle, J., and Henry, E. (1993) *Diversity in Women's Organisations: Maori and Pakeha*, Paper presented at the Fifth International Interdisciplinary Congress on Women, San Jose, Costa Rica, February 22-26.
- Reichert, G. (ed.) (1993) Women and Power, *Climbing Rose*, 11 (June 1993): 1, 7.
- Reichert, G. (ed.) (1994) Women and leadership, *Climbing Rose*, 16 (April 1994): 1, 7-8.
- Reinharz, S. (1992) *Feminist Methods in Social Research*, Oxford University Press, New York.
- Report of the working group on employment policy (undated) *Prepared for the Cabinet Social Equity Committee By a Working Group convened by the Secretary of Labour*, Unpublished.
- Resources For Women, Inc. (1979) *On Their Own: Women Entrepreneurs*, Santa Cruz, Resources For Women.
- Ribbens, J. (1989) Interviewing - An "unnatural Situation?" *Women's Studies International Forum*, Vol 12, No 6, 1989: 579-591.
- Roberts, H. (ed.) (1981) *Doing Feminist Research*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Roddick, A. (1991) *Body and Soul*, London: Ebury Press.
- Rose, D. (1985) *Employment and the Economy*, Wellington, New Zealand Planning Council.
- Rose, D. (1990) How Do We Achieve Full Employment? The Full Employment Scenario, *New Zealand Planning Council Seminar*, Wellington, 29 March 1990.
- Rosenberg, W. (1993) *New Zealand Can Be Different and Better*, Christchurch, New Zealand Monthly Review Society Inc.
- Runcie, J. (1976) *Experiencing Social Research*, Illinois, The Dorsey Press.
- Saville-Smith, K. (1987) Women and the State, in Cox, S. *Public and Private Worlds: Women in Contemporary New Zealand*, Wellington, Allen and Unwin/Port Nicholson Press.

- Sayers, J. (1992) Women and the Trade Union Movement: Issues, in Olsson, S. (ed) ***The Gender Factor***, Palmerston North, The Dunmore Press.
- Scott, C. (1987) The 1985 Tax Reform Package, in Boston, J., and Holland, M. ***The Fourth Labour Government: Radical Politics in New Zealand***, Auckland, Oxford University Press.
- Shannon, P. (1991) ***Social Policy***, Auckland, Oxford University Press.
- Shipley, S. (1982) ***Women's Employment and Unemployment: A Research Report***, Palmerston North, Department of Sociology, Massey University and the Society for Research on Women.
- Simpson, D., and Raumati H. (1991) ***Maori Women In Business: The Issues And Trends They Face When Establishing Their Businesses***, Ministry of Women's Affairs, Wellington.
- Small, D. (1989) Participatory Research: The Whys and Wherefores in ***Race ,Gender , Class***, 8 (March).
- Smith, A. (1995) Job survey exposes trends for women, ***The Dominion, Wellington***, (March 15): 23.
- Smith, H. (1975) ***Strategies of Social Research: The Methodological Imagination***, New Jersey, Prentice-Hall.
- St. John, S. (1992) ***Women and Superannuation*** , Wellington, Ministry of Women's Affairs.
- St. John, S. (1993) Income Security in a Dynamic and Changing Economy, in Moore, M (ed.) ***A Nation that can Work Again***, Wellington, M.M.S.C.
- Stanley, L., and Wise, S. (1983) 'Back into the personal' or: our attempt to construct 'feminist research', in Bowles, G., and Klein, R. ***Theories of Women's Studies***, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Statistics New Zealand (1993) ***All About Women In New Zealand***, Wellington, Statistics New Zealand.
- Statistics New Zealand (1995) ***Labour Market 1994***, Wellington, Statistics New Zealand.

- Statistics New Zealand (1994 a ) *Labour Market 1993*, Wellington, Statistics New Zealand.
- Statistics New Zealand (1994 b) *Business Activity 1992-93*, Wellington, Statistics New Zealand.
- Stephens, B. (1992) Budgeting with the Benefit Cuts, in Boston, J., and Dalziel, P. A *Decent Society?* Auckland, Oxford University Press.
- Stevenson, T. (1986a) *Women and Work - Women's Kit 3*, Department of Labour, Wellington.
- Stevenson, T. (1986b ) *Non-Traditional Roles - Women's Kit 5*, Department of Labour, Wellington.
- Still, L. (1990) *Enterprising Women* , Australia, Allen and Unwin.
- Strategos Consulting Limited, (1990) *Maori Businesswomen and Banking*, Wellington,
- Suffrage Centennial Year Trust Whakatu Wahine. (1993) *Celebrating Women: A Suffrage Year Handbook*, Wellington, Suffrage Centennial Year Trust Whakatu Wahine.
- Tahi, B. (1991) *The Role of Small Business in the New Zealand Economy*, Wellington, Ministry of Women's Affairs.
- Tahi, B., and Meha, R. (1991) *Statistics For Maori Women In Business*, Wellington, Ministry of Women's Affairs.
- Taranaki Iwi Katoa Trust (1985) *Nga Rongo Korero*, 6 (4).
- Te Ohu Whakatupu, Ministry of Women's Affairs. (1992) *He Take Toro Haere .... A Directory of Maori Business and Professional Women*, Wellington, Ministry of Women's Affairs.
- Tepper, T., and Tepper, N. (1980) *The New Entrepreneurs: Women working from home*, New York, Universe Books.
- Te Whanau O Waipareira Trust. (1995) *Annual Report*, Auckland, Te Whanau O Waipareira Trust.

- The Co-operative Enterprise Loan Trust (C.E.L.T). (1988) *The Second Good Money Brochure*, Auckland, C.E.L.T.
- The Employment Network. (1985) *Submission to the Task Force on Benefit Reform*, Christchurch, Unpublished.
- The Kitchen Table. (1988) *The Poor Woman's Alternative to the Business Round Table*, Newsletters 1 and 2, Christchurch, The Kitchen Table.
- The Press (27 April, 1995) "Board got details in 'piecemeal way", *The Christchurch Press*, Christchurch.
- The Press (4 April, 1996) "Registration of Interest for 1996/97 Financial Year" *The Christchurch Press*, Christchurch.
- Thomson, M. (1992) What Sort of Option is Self-employment for Women? A Personal View, in Olsson, S. (ed.) *The Gender Factor*, Palmerston North, The Dunmore Press.
- Vellekoop-Baldock, C. (1990) *Volunteers in Welfare*, Allen and Unwin, Australia.
- Victorian Women's Trust. (1993-1994) *Nineth Annual Report*, Victoria, Victorian Women's Trust.
- Wajcman, J. (1983) *Women in Control: Dilemmas of a Worker's Co-operative*, Milton Keynes, The Open University Press.
- Walby, S. (ed.) (1988) *Gender Segregation at Work*, Milton Keynes, Open University Press.
- Waldergrave, C., Coventry, R. (1987) *An Open Letter on Poverty*, Platform Publishing, Wellington.
- Walker, S. (ed.) (1989) *Rogernomics: Reshaping New Zealand's Economy*, New Zealand Centre For Independent Studies, New Zealand.
- Waring, M. (1988) *Counting for Nothing: What Men Value and What Women are Worth*,
- Warren, J., et al. (1987) *Employment in Christchurch: An Update*, Christchurch, Canterbury Women's Employment Trust.
- Washington, S. (1988) Great Expectations : The Ministry of Women's Affairs and Public Policy, *Race, Gender, Class*, July 1988.

Watkins, T. (1995) "Lenders regard women as higher risk - Griffin", *The Evening Post, Wellington*, (15 March).

Welsh, M. (1988) *The Corporate Enigma*, New Zealand, G P Books.

Weston, K., and Rofel, L. (1984) Sexuality, Class and Conflict in a Lesbian Workplace, *Signs*, 9 (4): 623-646.

White, J. (1984) The rise of female Capitalism - Women as Entrepreneurs, *Business Quarterly* (Spring): 133-135.

Wilson, M.(1989) *Address to National Council on the Employment of Women Conference, 15 September 1989*, Unpublished.

Wilson, S. (1981) *Women, Families, and Work*. (Third Edition), Canada. McGraw-Hill Ryerson Ltd.

Women in Enterprise, *Constitution and Minutes*, 1990-1994.

Woodul, J. (1978) What's this about feminist businesses? in Jaggar, A., and Struhl, P. *Feminist Frameworks: Alternative Theoretical Accounts of the Relations between Women and Men*, New York, McGraw Hill.

Worth, H. (1995) Jo Worth: Chippie, *Broadsheet*, 205: 14-15.

Yin, R. (1994) *Case study research: Design and methods* (2nd edition.), Thousand Oaks California, Sage.

Young, D. (1985) *Casebook of Management for Non-Profit Organizations - Entrepreneurship and Organizational Change in the Human Services*, New York, Haworth Press.



## APPENDICES

## **APPENDIX A**

### **Information Sheet**

**University of Canterbury**

**Political Science Department**

**A Case Study of Women's Enterprise Development**

#### **INFORMATION**

You are invited to participate in the research project : A Case Study of Women's Enterprise Development. The aim of the project is to explore the challenges encountered by feminist organisations operating in commercial arenas. It attempts to explain why certain forms of organisation are favoured over others and the difficulties feminist groups have in maintaining these forms, particularly when the organisation is primarily government funded and subject to changes in government policy. It explores the issues of accountability, decision making, style and structure. It is intended that the research will produce information and ideas useful in the development of new models for the successful operation of such organisations.

I would like to set up some focus group discussions among those who have been involved in the [Femco] as Board members and staff, since its inception in 1987. I would also like to interview some of the women who were involved in the [Femco] at different stages of its development. Interviews will take about 1 - 1 1/2 hours and the focus group discussions approximately 2 hours. I am a current advisory member of the [Femco] Board and have the consent and support of the present Board for this research. (See attached letter)

The focus group discussions and interviews will centre on issues arising out of analysis of the organisation's minutes, funding applications and other written material held by the Trust. These issues include accountability mechanisms, decision making processes, conflict resolution, organisational structure, management style and the rapid growth and development of the organisation.

The information gained from focus group discussions and interviews will be used in an M.A. thesis, which I am currently completing in the Political Science Department of the

University of Canterbury. You may be assured of the complete confidentiality of data gathered in this investigation: the identity of participants will not be made public nor information arising out of interviews used, without their consent. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality all names, positions held within the organisation, and the name of the organisation will be omitted in the final thesis. All research material not used in the thesis will be destroyed.

I will be pleased to discuss any concerns you may have about participation in the project and can be contacted at 3320731(evenings) 3795893 (daytime).

The project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee.

Jan Francis  
Postgraduate student  
Political Science Department  
University of Canterbury

## **APPENDIX B**

### **CONSENT FORM**

A case study of women's enterprise development.

I have read and understood the description of the above-named project. On this basis I agree to participate in this research project. I understand that my anonymity will be preserved and that I will have the opportunity to read and comment on notes taken in any interview or group discussion in which I have participated. I understand that my consent is necessary if verbatim comments I have made in those contexts are to be used in the M.A. thesis produced by Jan Francis or in any subsequent publication. I understand also that I may at any time withdraw from the project, and that I may withdraw any information I have provided.

I agree to adhere to the conditions set out in the information sheet on this study and the commitments made on this consent form.

Signed.....

Date.....

## APPENDIX C

14 December 1994

Jan Francis  
C/- Youth Employment Service  
P O Box 2962  
CHRISTCHURCH

Dear Jan

The Board has discussed your request to have access to information from [Femco's] minutes, funding proposals and financial records for use in an M.A. thesis you are currently completing in the Political Science Department of the University of Canterbury.

The Board is happy to grant this request as long as the Board has access to the material derived from the organisation's records, before publication.

We understand that you will approach us individually for consent to participate in interviews or focus groups.

We look forward to the results of your work.

Yours faithfully

On behalf of [Femco] Board of Trustees

# APPENDIX D

## INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

### MAJOR THEMES

1. Responding to needs/adapting to changing environments.
2. Conflict between political, social and business objectives.
3. Conflict between organisation's objectives, funding requirements and service delivery.

### INTERVIEWS/FOCUS GROUPS

#### 1. ORIGINS

Behind the minutes - context of the time. Why? By whom? To provide what? Why separate and not a branch of C.W.E.T.? (Does this foreshadow difficulties with [Femco] and the Business Advisory Service?)

- . Why did C.W.E.T. wind up and [Femco] survive?
- . Was [Femco] seen as a service organisation and advocacy group?
- . Why was **provision** of work such an important plank?
- . Were there risks involved in setting up?
- . Was there individual motivation?
- . Did financial opportunities and Government requirements channel the groups organisational and financial choices?
- . Why not ACCESS - conscious choice?

#### 2. A FEMINIST BUSINESS

- . Was [Femco] seen as a business? A feminist business?
- . What was the attitude to growth? Profit?
- . Was there a cultural change? Subtle? Conscious?
- . How was the conflict between community work and self-sustainability managed? Why?
- . Why was [Femco] and the Business Advisory Service separated? How was that managed?
- . Again did financial opportunities and Government requirements channel the groups organisational and financial choices?

- . Were there real choices, e.g. B.Y.O.B., or what?
- . Were there greater demands for accountability, evaluation and monitoring when looking at business principles?
- . Were there failures? If so how were these managed?

### **3. THE ORGANISATION**

- . Why a Trust?
- . What type of decision making process?
- . How important were personalities?
- . Was there a cultural change? How was this managed?
- . What were the roles of Board, Management, Management Team and employees?
- . What were the conflicts?
- . How were power and equity issues addressed? Outcome?
- . How were people employed? What influences were there? Why are/were Lesbians attracted to the organisation? Was sexuality ever discussed?
- . What were the Board and Staff perceptions of goals and objectives?
- . Again did financial opportunities and Government requirements channel the groups and organisational and financial choices?
- . Independent judgement - closer personal relationships within organisation.

## APPENDIX E

107 Somerfield Street  
Christchurch 2

2 May 1995

Dear

I am currently completing my Masters thesis in political science at the University of Canterbury. My topic is Women's Enterprise Development in New Zealand 1984-1994, and involves a case study of [Femco]. As part of the case study I am interviewing people who have been involved with the organisation as staff and Board members. I would therefore like to interview you about your involvement with the organisation.

I realise that my involvement with the organisation makes this a difficult and sensitive task and one that you may not wish to participate in, but I do believe it is extremely important to have your story told by yourself rather than just through the minutes of the organisation. I am seeking to provide, through this study at the micro level, some insights into the tensions, contradictions and conflicts women face when developing enterprises and also how feminist organisations may deal with these issues. The major themes to be explored in interviews are:

1. Responding to needs / adapting to changing environments.
2. Conflict between political, social and business objectives.
3. Conflict between organisation's objectives, funding requirements and service delivery.

The interviews will focus on the origins of the organisation, including the original philosophy; [FEMCO] as a feminist business, including the expansion into business advisory services, growth and development; the organisation, including the choice of legal status (Trust), decision making processes and employment of staff.

I am keen to make this study as inclusive as possible and to present all points of view. If you do not wish to take part in interviews with me I would ask you to consider other alternatives such as being interviewed by someone else, providing me with some written answers to



specific questions, providing me with written comment, or providing such written information through my supervisor.

All information will be treated with total confidentiality, only used in the thesis, and returned to you for comment before publication. No names will be used. I have enclosed the information sheet and consent form for your consideration.

Should you agree to be interviewed I would be happy to consider any other conditions you may require.

I look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely

Jan Francis